



UNDEFEATED
BATHMUT
CHRONICLE

最強無敵の 機龍

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明月千里
SENRI AKATSUKI
春日歩
ASUGA KASUGA

Novel Illustrations



最弱無敗の
神装機竜

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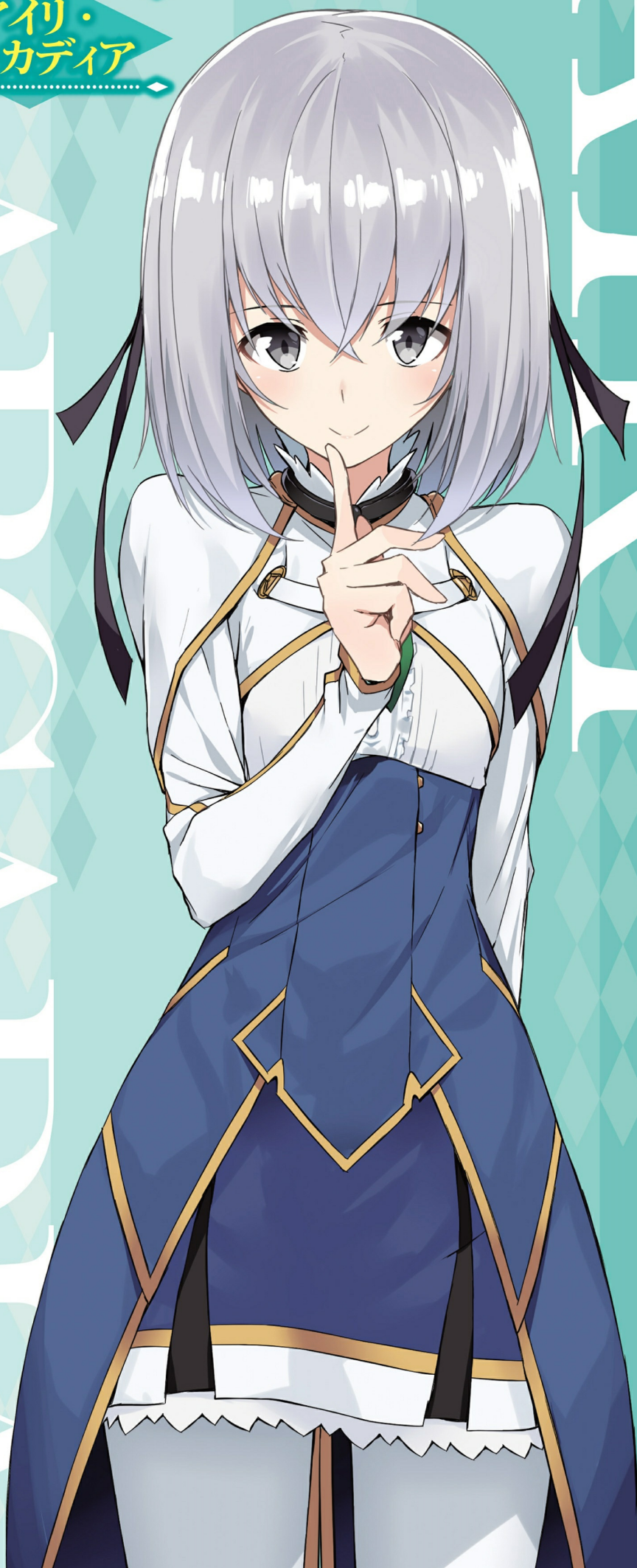
UNDEFEATED
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切姫夜架



アイリ・
アーカディア





最弱無敗の神装機電^{バハムート}7

明月千里



Character



ルクス・アーカディア

滅亡したアーカディア帝国の王子。
『無敗の最弱』と呼ばれる機竜使い。



リーズシャルテ・アティスマータ

アティスマータ新王国の王女。朱^{あか}の戦姫^{せんき}と呼ばれる。
神装機竜《ティアマト》の使い手。



フィルフィ・アイングラム

アイングラム財閥の次女。ルクスの幼馴染みで学園長の妹。
神装機竜《デュポーン》の使い手。



クルルシファー・エインフォルク

北の大国、ユミル教国からの留学生であるクラスメイト。
神装機竜《ファフニール》の使い手。



アイリ・アーカディア

旧帝国の皇族の生き残り。
一年生で、ルクスの実の妹。



セリスティア・ラルグリス

^{シヴァレス}
『騎士団』団長、学園最強の三年生。四大貴族の公爵家
令嬢で、神装機竜《リンドヴルム》の使い手。



切姫夜架

『帝国の凶刃』と呼ばれた暗殺者の少女。ルクスを主と
認め、仕えている。神装機竜《夜刀ノ神》の使い手。



アルテリーゼ・メイクレア

エインフォルク家の執事の女性。
^{エクスクラス}
特級階層の機竜使いでもある。

World

装甲機竜《ドラグライド》

遺跡から発掘された、古代兵器。

その中でも希少種であり、高い性能を持つものは、神装機竜と呼ばれる。

また、装甲機竜の使い手は、機竜使い《ドラグナイト》と呼ばれる。

遺跡《ルイン》

世界に七つ発見された古代遺跡。装甲機竜《ドラグライド》が発掘されたため、国力を左右する重要な存在として、各国間で縄張り争いが起きている。

幻神獣《アビス》

遺跡から現れる謎の幻獣。人類の脅威であり、機竜使いのみが対抗できる。

終焉神獣《ラグナレク》

ひとつの遺跡^{ルイン}に対し一匹のみ存在するという、超常の力を秘めた七匹の幻神獣。

『黒き英雄』

正体不明の装甲機竜《ドラグライド》を使い、たった1機で帝国の装甲機竜の約1200機を倒したと言われる伝説の英雄。

アティスマータ新王国

リーズシャルテの父であるアティスマータ伯が、アーカディア帝国に対して行ったクーデターによって、五年前に建国された国。

アーカディア旧帝国

世界の五分之一を束ねていた大国。世界最強と謳^{うた}われた、圧倒的な軍事力を背景に圧政を敷いていたが、クーデターによって滅ぼされた。

ルクスとアイリは、この帝国の皇族の生き残り。

七竜騎聖

年々高まる幻神獣の脅威に対抗し、世界協定に加盟した各国から選出された、代表の機竜使いたち。

Prologue – The Prince's Whereabouts

Part 1

The dark night where the howling of beasts could be heard.

The silhouettes of two people were standing in a deserted house at the outskirts where there wasn't any sign of life.

One person was a tall and lean man wearing a luxurious overcoat.

The other one was a silver haired young girl with a slender body build.

「.....That is the words from the first imperial princess. She asks if we can receive your assistance on that occasion.」

Towards the tall man who informed so—Fugil, the girl showed a slightly forbidding look.

「I understand the situation. But, there is one thing that I want to ask. Why did you lend a hand to that New Kingdom man—, to Dilwy Froias. Listelka-neesama's instruction shouldn't include that.」

The girl asked to press further at the man before her.

But, even then Fugil's fearless smile was still unchanging.

「That is a misunderstanding. I was merely choosing that man as a method in order to instill the threat of Dragon Marauder and the Ruins into the countries. Everything is the groundwork for what is to come.」

「.....I get it, stand back.」

After hearing the girl's sigh, Fugil straightened the collar of his overcoat and

bowed.

「Then please be careful, your highness Aeryl, the second Imperial Princess. Until that day where the dearest wish of us the empire and all the XferKey's Supervisor—the path to reach AvalonGreat Sanctuary is realized.」

The man only left those words behind before leaving without any sound.

Fugil..... that man who was an irregularheretic , a special case even among the Imperial Family, had been their ally consistently since far in the past.

But regardless of that, when the girl was in Fugil's presence, she would raise her voice against her better judgment.

Her big sister Listelka was giving him her utmost trust, but she was unable to accept that instinctively.

No matter what, she felt an unpleasant feeling with the way that man was looking at her and other people.

It wasn't a gaze that was looking down on others.

Even though it wasn't an apathetic gaze, it was a bizarre gaze that she couldn't feel even the slightest fixation in it.

It felt like that gaze was appraising humans as guinea pigs—no, it felt like those eyes weren't even considering humans as living beings.

That dark eye glint that felt like it was observing some kind of object or even numerical formula was spurring on the girl's unease.

「As I thought, I have to disclose the truth..... I—」 (TN: Here the girl use 'boku' instead of the more feminine 'watashi' to refer to herself)

The girl only whispered that in the end before vanishing into the dark night.

Part 2

「Fuuaah.....!」

In the New Kingdom's city of Cross FieldFort City, at the first block's AcademyRoyal Officer Academy.

Inside the Drag-Ride atelierworkshop located at that vast ground, Lizsharte stretched herself in a big way.

「.....Hmm. In the end I fell asleep here again.」

She rubbed her half-asleep eyes while brushing away the blanket that was put on her body. She shivered slightly after the blanket was removed.

The morning of autumn where the leaves were also starting to change color felt slightly chilly on the skin.

「Just a bit more until it's finished huh. I thought that it would make it in time for the campus festival but—」

Lisha was going to the atelier for developing a new technology for the Drag-Ride.

The incident that happened at the class promotion examination which took place in the Vanheim Principality the other day.

The appearance rate of the Abyss was increasing and the Ruins became harder to conquer, and the rise of warmongers that were called as Dragon Marauder.

While everyone was also becoming stronger to oppose those, Lisha was also putting her zeal into her research.

From that she was so immersed into it that she fell asleep here unintentionally.

On the central work stand, there were disassembled parts and written

blueprints scattered everywhere.

「—Wait, damn it!? It's already this kind of time!?!」

After being in a daze for a while, Lisha saw the clock placed inside the room and panicked.

Today should be a holiday, but by this time Lux would have already started doing his morning chores.

「No good! If I don't do something about this appearance quickly—!?!」

She took off her work gown in a feverish haste with a fluster, then she fixed her disarrayed uniform's blouse and skirt.

Then she washed her face and retied her prided side tail before she patted down her chest in relieve.

Since Lux became Lisha's knight, he became worried for Lisha who was sleeping overnight at the atelier and he would come once every late night and early morning in order to check on her.

She felt really happy of him doing that, but she was a bit troubled that he could see her exhausted and slovenly appearance.

If possible she wanted Lux to think of her as cute when he saw her.

「Ah, today is scheduled for the 『operation』 huh.」

Lisha suddenly recalled and she boiled water in the serving room deep inside the atelier.

Lisha was secretly planning that she would treat Lux who came to visit her in between his always busy chores with tea, at least when it was a holiday.

『Even though Lisha-sama is also busy, but to go so far as to do something like this for me—I'm happy.』

「No well, it's not that big of a deal. Once in a while even I need to show my feminine side.」

Lisha did a rehearsal while imagining Lux's grateful reaction.

Furthermore, this time, Lisha was thinking that she would make a request of him.

It was a plan to go incognito for a preliminary inspection at a city within the territory where she would be going for inspection in her official business as a princess.

If it went well, then perhaps she could hold hands with him once more. She would be happy if she could.

「Yosh! With this I'm ready anytime you will come, my knight!」

Saying that Lisha folded her arms and waited with a proud smile.

.....But, for some reason it was only today that there wasn't any sign at all that he was coming.

「Strange huh? That guy's activity rhythm should be far more exact than me though—」

After tilting her head in puzzlement and waiting further, a sound came from outside the door.

「.....? Is there, someone?」

Lisha became curious and opened the atelier's door, but there was no one outside.

But, a cup of tea that appeared to be boiled in the dining hall was put on a black tray on the ground.

「—Is this, from Lux?」

Lisha talked to herself, but naturally there was no reply.

「Good grief, what a hasty guy. Even though he can at least accompany me for morning tea.....」

Her lips pouted slightly, even so she brought the cup to her mouth.

But, the moment she took a sip, something strange occurred.

「.....wait, it's bad-!? What is this!?!」

Looking closer, inside the tea there were a lot of tea leaves directly inside, floating up. In short it wasn't filtered.

「Who! Who is the guy that did this kind of misleading thing!?!」

Lisha was convinced that it wasn't Lux who brought this here.

It felt like she was doubly faulted, including from how she was made to drink this bad tea.

「Can't be helped. Today I'll be the one who goes to meet him then.」

Lisha grumbled like that, then she started moving in order to search for Lux.

「—Nii-san's location, is it?」

Lisha who rushed out of the atelier first visited the shared room of Airi and Noct in the girl's dormitory.

「Right. Lux who usually always came didn't show his face to me. That's why, it's, I'm curious, just for a bit.....」

Lisha spoke a bit embarrassedly.

Airi and Noct who saw that started whispering with low voices.

「She is infatuated with Nii-san a lot, isn't she? For her to expressly search for Nii-san like this just because he didn't come like usual.」

「Yes. But, compared to when she was immersing herself entirely in developing Drag-Rides, I think this is a far healthier thinking.」

「E, enough with that, just tell me! Where is Lux right now!?!」

「Unfortunately, I also don't know about that.」

Airi seriously answered the question of the red faced Lisha.

「The chores schedule of Nii-san is too complex, it's at the level that even Tillfur-san, who is compiling the requests, doesn't understand where Nii-san's location is.」

「I, I see.Got it, I'll try asking someone else.」

After Lisha left, Airi let out a sigh.

Then Noct softly brought her lips closer to Airi's ear.

「Is it okay Airi? You didn't tell Lisha-sama about that matter.」

「It's fine. It's not like it's something related. Usually Nii-san's figure can be seen from this room's window, but today I didn't see him by chance, telling her such thing is—」

Airi spoke brusquely.

Yes. Just like Lisha, even Airi was harboring the same uncomfortable feeling from this morning.

But, it was embarrassing to tell other people that she would usually look around from her room's window to search for the figure of her big brother doing chores around the girl's dormitory, so she couldn't say it.

Especially because at the incident the other day, there was the particular where she fawned on him after so long, which made it feel even more embarrassing.

「Airi is also going through troubles. In various meanings.」

「Ple, please don't say strange things right from the morning!」

When Noct who usually stayed cool said such thing smilingly, Airi raised her voice flusteredly.

「However, certainly I'm just a bit concerned. About Nii-san.」

The beginning of the usual calm ordinary day.

But, Airi was feeling an atmosphere that was vaguely different from usual.

「I think the possibility is low but.....」

Lisha who left the shared room of Airi and Noct was heading directly to Lux's room this time.

Lux shouldn't be there if he was doing his morning chores, but she knocked on the door just in case.

Lisha could hear a quiet sleeper's breathing in place of a voice, so Lisha entered inside while feeling puzzled—but, 「Lux, are you there? —Eh?」

Lux's figure wasn't inside. Philuffy was sleeping on his bed instead.

「Munyaa..... Lu, chan.」

Instantly, *piki*- Lisha was petrified on the spot.

She ran her gaze around looking whether Lux was on the bed or not, then she went outside to check the name tag of the room, after that she leaped at Philuffy.

「Oi! What are you doing here airhead girl!? Where did Lux go!?!」

「Nn, nn.....」

When Lisha shook Philuffy's body roughly to the left and right, the swelling of her chest that was heavily laden with those fruits also shook greatly following the shaking.

Lisha also belonged in the categorization of 'the have' for her small body, but as expected that impressive presence Philuffy had was overpowering.

「Fua..... Good morning, princess..... Is there, something?」

「That's my line here! Where is Lux!?!」

From Philuffy's thin sleepwear, the outline of a well-fleshed voluptuous body could be seen clearly, and coupled with that childish and pure expression, she looked really arousing.

When Lisha thought of what would happen if Lux saw that figure which would make even the heart of the same sex to skip a beat, she became very concerned.

「Lu, chan.....? We were together, until we slept yesterday, but.....」

「Sle, sleeping together you say-!? Wh, wh-wh-wh-why did you do such thing-!? N, no, more importantly—」

That meant, Lux was definitely in the girl's dormitory until last night.

She was concerned about the case of Lux and Philuffy sleeping together, but she also felt the same that he was suddenly disappearing from view.

「Shit-! I'm going to ask about this later for sure, Lux!」

Lisha's cheeks were slightly reddening while she moved to the next place to search for Lux.

Even though this was a holiday that rarely came, a lot of her acquaintances were still going through the day at their own pace.

When Lisha headed towards the Drag-Ride practice ground, she accidentally saw the figure of Celis wiping her sweat while changing from the window of the waiting room.

「Fuu, as expected sweat flowing from training is a good thing. It will be even more worth doing if Lux also showed up but—」

Because she could hear such monologue from across the wall, Lisha's hand that almost knocked on the door stopped.

Lisha came searching here because sometimes Lux accompanied Celis in her morning training, but (.....She is talking, does that mean someone else is there?)

Celistia Ralgris, the strongest in the Academy, and the captain of SyvallesKnight Order.

She who possessed a dignified look and a grace befitting someone from the Four Great Nobles, and who was famous as a 『man-hater』, but for the first time she recognized Lux who was the only male in the Academy, causing the Academy to be greatly stirred.

In addition, the other day, she had just gotten settled as the aide of Lux who was appointed as a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins, the group of Drag-Knights that each represented their respective country.

In that kind of meaning, she was similar to Lisha based on their positions, a girl that was close with Lux from the relationship of their official positions.

(We, well, until the end it seems that Celis only thinks of Lux as a man who is her junior anyway.....) Lisha whispered in her heart to calm herself, but,

「—But I'm happy. For him to expressly deliver a drink for me」

「Wha-.....!？」

Lisha twitched in reaction to Celis's muttering that sounded deeply impressed.

Even though she completely thought that the tea was only placed for her at her atelier in the morning, and yet.....!

(No, more importantly, she said that a drink was delivered to her, that means the one inside the waiting room right now is—) 「Thinking back, everyone who was training with me would go to rest earlier than me, so I never had someone being considerate to me..... n, no. I am the captain, so I'm in the position that has to pay attention to everyone else instead, but—」

Hearing Celis's delighted tone that was different from her usual atmosphere caused Lisha to be flustered.

「Lux is younger than me, and yet he is also being considerate to me who is like that. Next time as my gratitude by all means I—」

「—What are you doing, the two of you!」

Lisha who couldn't endure anymore opened the door hard in panic.

「Kyah.....!?!」

「.....Eh?」

Inside, Celis who was in her underwear appearance yelled in surprise, while Lisha tilted her head in puzzlement.

Even though she thought Celis was talking with Lux from her tone, and yet inside the room there wasn't any sign of another person.

Just, on the chair in front of Celis, a small bear plushy was placed to sit.

「Wha, what business do you have Lizsharte!? I, it's not like I'm doing anything. Tha, that's, something like consulting a plushy, because I don't have a talking partner, such thing didn't happen in any way here!」

「.....Well, doesn't matter. By the way, did Lux come here?」

When Lisha asked with a look as though she had witnessed something terribly disappointing, Celis adjusted her breathing in a hurry.

「Ye, yes. It seemed that some time ago he came to take a look here, and he left a letter and a drink behind. Though I didn't see his figure directly.」



「So it's the same like with me, huh.....」

There was nothing that was obviously strange, but as expected it felt strange.

Considering Lux's personality, as long as there was nothing really pressing, he should at least show his face.

「But, certainly it's strange. Before I found this letter, I felt the presence of someone.」

「What.....?」

The moment Lisha showed a dubious face, *rustle* a slight sound could be heard from the thicket.

「-.....!? Are you there Lux!?」

Lisha reflexively yelled at the direction from where the sound came, but there was no reply.

「Eei! After coming this far, I'm not going to stop until I see your face!」

「Ple, please wait Lizsharte! I'll also come with you to search!」

When Lisha started dashing toward the school building, Celis who had changed also followed her.

It was now time for breakfast, while the figures of students in uniform were starting to walk inside the school grounds here and there, their search continued.

Library, the girl's dormitory's surroundings, behind the school building, the storage room, etc., they continuously went around to the places where Lux might be doing chores at, but for some reason Lux wasn't at any of those places although there were signs of work.

Even so after they continued to keep walking, they came across two people walking around the academy's ground in the morning just like them.

They were Sharis and Tillfur of the Triad, the famous trio of the Academy.

「Oh, good morning Princess.」

「Gooood morning Lisha-sama. Today you are really early, aren't you.」

「.....You two, what are you doing since the morning?」

They were walking to the same direction perhaps coincidentally. Lisha asked them while walking side by side.

「No, we are looking for someone who seems to be Lux-chi but—somehow we cannot find him.」

「What does that mean?」

Celis asked in curiosity, to which Sharis who was in the same grade as her nodded calmly.

「We noticed when we were doing our morning patrol see. Limited to this morning, the quality of Lux-kun's chores is strangely coarse. There, together with Tillfur, I was chasing him following after his schedule today but—」

「A, and then, where do you think Lux is?」

「He must be cleaning the parlor. If he is following the usual order, then the possibility should be high—」

Tillfur looked at the memo in her hand while answering Lisha's question.

「.....Yosh, then we are going to absolutely find him!」

Like that the four entered the school building. There a single girl was standing in front of the parlor.

「Eh? Philuffy?」

Tillfur's voice caused the absentminded girl before them to turn her gaze towards them.

「.....Morning, everyone.」

Philuffy was holding the doorknob. It seemed that she was just about to enter the parlor.

「Wai-!? Why are you here, huh! Today is a holiday right!?!」

「I received snacks from the dining hall, so I'm thinking to eat it together with Lu-chan.」

From behind Philuffy who was replying like that with her usual expressionless

look, even Airi and Noct arrived there.

「Oh, is Airi-chan also looking for your big brother? Also, even Noct too.」

Noct who also belonged to the Triad nodded to Sharis's question.

「Yes. Airi said that she wanted to see Lux-san's face no matter what, so I'm helping a little.」

「Please don't say it strangely! That's, I only have something that I want to ask Nii-san for a bit!」

「So in the end everyone is looking for Lux-chi? Even though today is a holiday.」

「.....」

An indescribable silence was spreading from Tillfur's words.

Lisha, Philuffy, Celis, Airi, and then the trio of the Triad.

All these girls whose grades were scattered all over assembled together looking for Lux.

「We, well fine! Right now this is the priority. Are you there!? Lux—.....-!?」

Right after Lisha opened the door of the parlor, she spontaneously lost her words from shock.

Light shined in from the gap of the closed curtain into the dim room.

At the inside that was decorated with extravagant red carpet and high class furniture, a lone girl was standing.

「—My? So I'm found out already.」

A black haired girl wearing the Academy's uniform, with a katana shaped Sword Device hanging on her waist.

The girl was a Drag-Knight who was once called as the Empire's Assassin Blade in the Arcadia Empire, and currently, she recognized Lux as her master and became his servant.

Only recently she came under the jurisdiction of the Academy as a newly admitted student. Kirihome Yoruka, was standing there.

「Wha-!? Why are you here!? Don't tell me, the one doing the chores today was—」

「Yes. It's me.」

Yoruka's face broke out into a bright smile in response to Lisha's question and she replied immediately.

Everyone who saw that stiffened in bewilderment.

「What is the meaning of this? Why are you doing such misleading—」

When Celis asked that, Yoruka chuckled and presented a letter before her eyes.

「It's because that's my role.」

「This is— Lux's!?!」

Lisha snatched the letter as though plundering it and she hurriedly read the written letters.

At the same time, Yoruka also talked about the letter's content.

「Since last night, Aruji-sama headed outside of the country for a certain task to do. Although—his departure was earlier by one day than the original schedule.」

「EEEEEH!?!」

Tillfur spontaneously raised a shocked voice.

When she looked to Airi at the side in hurry, the girl shook her head left and right.

「I also haven't heard about it, such thing.....」

「I was ordered to do today's chores in Aruji-sama's place, and at the end I am to tell about this matter to all of you. And with that, my duty is concluded.」 (TN: A trivia, Yoruka's talking in the raw often ended with 'desuwa', it's a word that is often used by high class elegant lady characters, I think) 「Wa, wait a bit. I don't see Krulcifer's figure since some time ago, don't tell me—」

When Lisha looked around inside the room restlessly, Yoruka responded with a carefree smiling face.

「Yes. Just last night, Aruji-sama embarked to the Ymir Theocracy with Krulcifer-san. Just the two of them.」

「.....」

Everyone there other than Yoruka had their mouth gaping open while their bodies stiffened.

「EEEEeeEEEEH!?!」

Episode 1 – Arriving in the Nostalgic Land

Part 1

「Is it really okay doing that I wonder.....」

Lux shivered from the cold air right after he recalled it and smiled wryly.

It hadn't began to actually snow, but the whole surface of the city was covered with the quiet color of winter.

In order to distance the body from the cold, the houses were made from thick stone.

Among them, he could see several buildings made from wooden staves in the style of a stave church. It made him feel for real that this was the land that was supported by religious faith—the great country of the north, Ymir.

The number of churches was incomparably a lot more than in the New Kingdom. And even among those churches, he could see from afar the cathedral, which was the substitute for a royal palace in this Holy Capital, in the northern part of the city.

「From here the weather will be growing cold, so it's better to tighten your collar a bit more.」

Krulcifer beside him gently whispered and she circled her hand on Lux's collar.

The girl's slender fingers that could be felt even from across the gloves and her smiling face caused Lux's heart to throb slightly.

The warm and light fur coat he wore was all prepared by Krulcifer for him.

Traveling for half a day from the New Kingdom until the Ymir Theocracy was

really difficult.

If using normal methods, they would have to go through a voyage of more than ten-odd days using horse carriage and ship with transit in between, but Lux and Krulcifer ignored that.

They made maximum use of their status as Drag-Knights with high aptitude scores to travel through the sky in the fastest speed.

It was a long distance that if it was other students, they would quickly get exhausted. The two were able to fly by taking several short breaks midway.

And then now, the two entered the Holy Capital that was the capital city of the Ymir Theocracy. Currently they were taking in the sight of that townscape.

「I made you do something really excessive all the way until here, so if you're tired do you want to go rest somewhere?」

Lux lightly shook his head towards the consideration of the girl walking beside him.

From the start Krulcifer was a beautiful girl, but seeing her in this Holy Capital gave him another different impression.

Her symmetrical supple stature, and her snowy skin that was pure white and smooth.

Her fantastical blue long hair and her pair of eyes that looked like ice made her look more like a fairy than human.

「I'm fine. Besides, this time, I'm coming as Krulcifer-san's escort.」

He would be lying if he said that he wasn't tired, but Lux pretended to be tough like usual and said that.

The reason Lux accompanied her this time was that.

The home of Krulcifer, who came as a transfer student from the Ymir Theocracy, the Einvolk house called her back using a letter that said that there was an urgent business.

There was the secret that Krulcifer's birthplace was from the fourth Ruin, the HallTunnel, in this country, so most likely this urgent business should be related

to the Ruin.

In order to become the strength of this girl who was his important friend, he came together with her to pitch in and help.

「It's okay to not act tough you know? Everything will come to nothing if you catch a cold.」

She leaked out a chuckle before bringing her shoulder close to him.

「Wha, what's the matter Krulcifer-san!? I, if you stick that close, i, it makes it harder to walk.....」

「I'm thinking to warm Lux-kun a little so you won't feel cold. You don't like it?」

The cheeks of the girl who was smiling teasingly could be seen faintly blushing.

The sweet breath and whisper caused even Lux's face to turn red.

「I, I'm fine here. Rather than that, everyone—I wonder if they are surprised that I was suddenly gone?」

「Surely just about now it's turning into a great uproar over there.」

The tone of voice of Krulcifer who was telling Lux that sounded vaguely amused.

She fundamentally had an image as a talented person, but unexpected she also possessed humor or perhaps playfulness.

Regarding the journey this time, Lux followed Krulcifer's suggestion and made preparations beforehand.

First, he didn't want to make this talk to become too big of a matter and dragged the other girls into it.

Especially to Lisha who Lux served as her exclusive knight, and to Celis who acted as his aide in his capacity as a Seven Dragon Paladin.

Thus, he informed only very few people about the matter this time, including the headmaster, Relie. And to make it look like Lux was still remaining at the academy until the very last moment before it was discovered, he left Yoruka

behind to convey his message to the others.

Yoruka fundamentally didn't listen to what anyone said except Lux, so Lux ordered her just like Krulcifer suggested, but—

「But, I wonder if Yoruka is doing well in conveying my message? As I thought, I should have at least told the others when I was departing from the Academy.....」

「That's no good Lux-kun. If we didn't have that girl remaining behind in the New Kingdom with your command, she would willfully come with us no matter what right? In that case, my plan would also come to nothing.」

「Eh.....? Just now what—」

Lux could hear the word plan said smoothly just now, but did she mean the travel plan by that?

「More importantly, there is a nostalgic face there.」

When Lux was about to ask about it, Krulcifer turned her gaze to the front.

There, an adult female in black dress suit attire was standing.

「I'm sorry to have made you wait, Ojou-sama. And then—Lux-sama, long time no see.」(TN: Ojou-sama = term of respect for a daughter of a high-class family) Alterize McClair.

A steady and rigid woman who was a butler of the Einvolk house. Once, she had confronted Krulcifer, nominating Barzeride of the Four Great Nobles to be her fiancée. In the end she recognized Lux and also reconciled with Krulcifer.

The girl who he was reunited with after a few months welcomed him with a friendly smile.

「Are you also in good health? In the letter, I heard that the snow has begun to fall this year though?」

「It's colder than average, but I'm fine. After all I was also born in this country.」

When Krulcifer called out to her, Alterize smiled calmly in response.

Their personalities were opposite to each other's and their relationship was

also that of master and servant, but the two who had a similar background of getting adopted and raised in the Einvolk house looked like they had a mysterious bond with each other in Lux's mind.

「I have prepared the horse carriage. Please, over here.」

Alterize bowed before she began to walk through the main street. Lux and Krulcifer followed her.

(I'm glad. Both of them look like they are closer than before.)

For Krulcifer, it seemed that her home, the Einvolk house felt somewhat uncomfortable for her, but if Alterize became her ally then it was reassuring.

While Lux was thinking like that in relieve, Alterize suddenly lowered her walking speed and walked beside Krulcifer.

And then, she sent a brief glance at Lux who was walking slightly behind them.

「By the way Ojou-sama. That's—your relationship with him, how far has it reached?」

「My? So even someone serious like you will grow some interest in the relationship of a man and woman any time now?」

「-..... do, don't make fun of me please!? That's, I have a duty to report to the house.」



Alterize coughed with a red face against Krulcifer's reply.

Then the blue haired young lady spoke her answer with slight hesitation.

「Let's see. Our situation is one where it won't be an exaggeration that our relationship as lovers is deepening favorably.」

「Tha, that's really good to hear. And—is, is it okay even if I ask for the specific?」

「It's just as you saw, when we were walking together at the festival in the royal capital, I received a kiss from him. That is the degree of our relationship right now.」

「-.....!?!」

「Besides, in the Academy, we were spending time together almost every night.」

「A-, as expected is, isn't that, a little bit too far of a progress!?!」

「It's not a concern. Because we are properly bearing in mind our standing as students.」

Krulcifer informed the flustered Alterize with a smooth tone of deep meaning.

But, perhaps the information was too astounding because the female butler stiffened dumbfounded for a while.

(Are they talking about the matter of the Einvolk house?)

Lux was watching over the two in front of him without even knowing about that. Then Alterize dropped her pace and came to stand besides Lux.

「E, err, Lux-sama. I'll look after the luggage.」

「Thank you very much.」

Lux responded to Alterize's offer with a gentle smile.

But, for some reason she didn't return to Krulcifer's side who was walking ahead and continued to walk beside Lux.

「Err, Lux-sama. While presumptuous, there is something that I wish to ask you. How is your relationship with Ojou-sama recently?」

「Eh.....?」

Lux was staring in puzzlement while thinking slightly.

Several moments ago, there was a need to make Alterize be under the impression that he was Krulcifer's lover.

This time he came as the escort of Krulcifer who returned back home because of her house's order. He wondered if he should answer that they were just normal friends.

「Yes. Krulcifer-san is always looking after me.」

「I, is that so? That's, I heard that the two of you have become even closer to each other? That's, it seems that the two of you got along really well even at the royal capital. I also heard something like, the two of you spending every night together at the Academy.....」

「Ah, so it's about that. It's exactly like that but—」

Lux agreed and he nodded with a smile.

It was about the matter of Krulcifer giving Lux supplementary lesson in order for him to catch up to the class work that he fell behind because of his late admission.

「I, is that true!? That Ojou-sama is doing something like that, I find it a little hard to imagine it.」

「Yes. She was the one who invited me, but I too often requested her for it. Because Krulcifer-san is really skilled at teaching.」

「I, it's Ojou-sama who is leading!?!」

「.....? Err, I think that's the case. Though I'm also doing my best to catch up to her.」

「E, even though I'm four years older.....! Su, such thing is..... Pu, putting that aside, yo, you are doing that far inside the academy!?!」

「Not just in the classroom, we were even doing it in the girl's dormitory or the dining hall. When we don't have time, we would even do it in the courtyard a bit.」

「Do, doing such things even outside-!? Tha, that is, as expected—」

Alterize couldn't hide her shock and she started walking to the front once more with staggered footsteps.

When Lux tilted his head in puzzlement, Krulcifer came to his side.

「Krulcifer-san, what were you talking about with Alterize-san?」

「I was only telling her accurately about the relationship between the two of us.」

They boarded the horse carriage Alterize prepared and they advanced through the main street of the Holy Capital that was the mainstay city of the country.

Lux was peeking at the scenery outside through the small window while feeling a certain out-of-place feeling.

「The townscape of the Holy Capital, how is it compared to the Royal Capital?」

「Somehow, I'm having a mysterious feeling. Even though the atmosphere is quiet at a glance, it looks like the citizens are vaguely restless—」

The air was solemn which was appropriate for a religious country, but there was a vague feeling of exhilaration.

When Lux told the impression he felt, Alterize who was sitting behind the carriage answered him.

「What a keen insight. It's because the Pilgrimage Festival, which is an important ceremony for the adherents of the Ymir Theocracy, will start from tomorrow.」

Lux heard about the country's culture from Alterize during their travel until the destination.

The Pilgrimage Festival was one of the large festivals that were held every year in the Ymir Theocracy. It seemed that it was a ceremony that also held a large meaning in their doctrine.

This country deified an existence that was worshipped as god. On that day the people would offer their prayers.

It was also a festival where people would walk towards places which had a connection with god, but in reality the ones who would visit several holy places would only be the high ranked priests like the pope and bishops, their guards, and perhaps several influential nobles of the Theocracy who were believers of the religion.

In addition, one of the holy places in the country existed nearby the Ruin.

Therefore, in the current time, where the Abyss's appearance frequency was increasing, the pilgrimage would be accompanied by a lot of guards.

「Currently we are not heading towards the Einvolk house, but to the center of the capital—the Sanctuary. Originally his eminence the pope would be at the cathedral, but for the sake of the audience of this time, we are heading to this place.」

「.....Understood.」

Lux's hand was holding a letter from Queen Raffi.

The content couldn't be read because the letter was sealed, but when he received permission for his trip from Headmaster Relie, for some reason even the New Kingdom's Prime Minister Nulph knew about this trip.

As a person who was appointed as a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins, go to give greetings to the allied country—that must be their intention.

Before long, the horse carriage arrived in front of the sanctuary.

It was conspicuously standing out even inside the Holy Capital, a chalk white palace that brought about a solemn atmosphere.

Its outside appearance wasn't too showy, but, it was a building that was congealed with a design that made its viewer feel the history and authority.

「Ojou-sama. Do you remember the etiquette in the Sanctuary?」

「Even though I look like this, I intend to be a devout believer you know? Even in the case that I'm driven out from the Einvolk house, I won't forget it in just around one year.」

The question of Alterize who got down from the carriage was answered like that by Krulcifer with an ironic smile that didn't feel pious at all.

Alterize leaked out a wry smile at that attitude while presenting something wrapped in cloth to Krulcifer.

「This is the usual garment. I will wait here.」

「Then let's go, Lux-kun.」

「Ye, yes.」

Lux passed through the sanctuary's gate after Krulcifer.

The inside had pillars and a ceiling that were engraved with pictographs, made in a way that gave the feeling of the history and culture of the religious country.

The corridor that connected the building had a long and narrow carpet laid out on the floor. The surrounding was illuminated dimly by lamps.

While Lux was soaking himself in that unique atmosphere, Krulcifer's feet suddenly stopped.

「There is a waiting area if you go straight from here. My bad Lux-kun, but can you wait just for a bit there? Don't move as much as possible from there.」

「I don't mind but, why?」

「I have a bit of business. When it has been a long time since a believer entered the Sanctuary, there are a lot of troublesome procedures to do.」

After saying that with a faint smile, Krulcifer walked towards a byway passage.

Her back became more distant without even any time to call out to her.

「So I guess for now, I just need to wait over there.....?」

Lux headed towards the place that seemed to be the waiting place at the corridor, then there he sighed 'fuu' and sat down.

The Sanctuary in the Ymir Theocracy was mainly a place for audiences or ceremonies. The number of guards there weren't that many, but a strange tension was hanging in the air.

(Even so, is she okay I wonder, Krulcifer-san.)

The reason Krulcifer was called back by the Einvolk house still wasn't clear

yet.

The hidden past of the girl whose origin was from a Ruin.

It would be fine if Lux could become the strength of Krulcifer who was bound by that fact.

「I've to properly help Krulcifer-san.」

When he whispered to himself like that, suddenly he could hear the repeated sound of footsteps on the floor.

「Big brother over there, are you worrying about something?」

「Eh.....?」

When Lux turned around towards that voice, a small silhouette was standing there.

A pure white robe without any stain was covering that petite body that was still childish.

Under the veil of the same color covering her head, a lovely smile could be seen.

It was a girl that was giving off sweetness like a white rose that had just only budded.

「Ah, right.....a little bit. You are, a believer's child? Did you come here for praying?」

When Lux also responded like that with a smile, the girl nodded once.

「Thaat's riight. I've been praying here from quite some time ago. Big brother is a person from a foreign country right? Should I show you around?」

The young girl suggested with a friendly smile.

「No but, I'm waiting here for a friend who I came with.」

「It's all right. We won't go for that long, we will be able to return soon, okay?」

The girl pulled at the sleeve of Lux's uniform with a spirited bright voice.

In the end Lux lost against her pushing and he accompanied her just for a bit.

The girl took Lux's hand and started walking with a fast pace.

And then she opened the door of a room that was slightly to the side of the passage that Krulcifer was heading to just now.

「Then, first won't you try going in there?」

「Ah, ok.....」

Urged by the girl, Lux entered the room that he was shown.

The cool room made from stone was dim, it was narrow like a passage.

「.....Eh?」

Inside the long and narrow room, there was only one lamp. He couldn't even see a few mel ahead.

Several shelves were lined up on the wall, and there was a small window at the opposite side with window bars in it.

Deeper inside the room was a closed door. There was the slight sound of water that he could hear.

「Err, this place is—?」

「Shh. Be quiet, we will be heard.」

When Lux tilted his head at the strange room's shape, the young girl put her index finger in front of her mouth.

And then, she showed a vaguely mischievous smile and made Lux's hand hold something.

「.....Eerr, what's this?」

While Lux was bewildered with the sensation of the fabric that was somewhat warm despite its smoothness, the young nun pointed at the barred window.

‘Look over there’, that must be what she meant.

But, when Lux brought his face closer to that window, a hard to believe sight flew into his eyes.

「.....-!?」

He spontaneously doubted his eyes.

The naked body of Krulcifer bathing in cold water was standing out in the dark background illuminated by lighting.

Pupils of ice color that were tinged with gloominess. Transparent pure white thin fabric was clinging on her smooth skin that glistened.

That was all her body wore, her lower body was naked.

Her beautiful blue hair that was dripping with water, and her lean body line were also in full view. Despite that on the chest of her body that looked like there was no excess at a glance, a vivid swelling of flesh could be seen just slightly although it was smallish.

That beautiful and sensual sight caused Lux's heartbeat to drum fiercely.

(Wha-!? Wh, why—!?)

Lux suddenly noticed in surprise a moment later.

It seemed that a devoted believer would clean their body at the entrance when they entered the sanctuary, rinsing out the filth of the outside world.

The bundle of cloth that Alterize handed over a while ago must be filled with the cloth for bathing.

But, Lux's head was wrapped in chaos even now when he had reached that answer.

「—Fuu」

At the other side of the window bar, a bewitching voice suddenly could be heard.

(This is bad! Like this, I'm peeping at Krulcifer-san will be—)

When Lux came to his senses and he was about to avert his gaze, the girl on the other side of the wall stirred.

「—Who!？」

Krulcifer raised a tense voice. Lux twitched and his body trembled.



The piercing gaze of the girl stabbed him through the window bars.

「Lux, kun.....?」

「Yo, you are mistaken Krulcifer-san!? Thi, this is, it's not like I'm peeping, that's, I was just led here by accident—」

Lux made an excuse in great panic towards Krulcifer who was making a bewildered expression.

The girl who was hiding her chest with both her hands was blushing red in shame while directing reproachful eyes filled with resentment towards him.

「I thought Lux-kun was a pervert and an underwear thief only when you enrolled into the Academy, but it seems that it was only my imagination.」

「Those are both misunderstandings you know!? I'm saying the truth, I was led here when someone was showing me around, it's not like I have any guilty conscience—wait, that child isn't here-!?!」

When he noticed and looked around, the figure of the nun who brought Lux here was gone.

When Krulcifer saw that with a chilly look, she let out an exasperated sigh 'haa'.

「Is that so? If possible I also want to believe Lux-kun, but unfortunately your persuasiveness seems to be nonexistent..... First can I ask you to let go of that thing inside your hand?」

When Lux turned his face down just as he was told, his own hand entered his sight.

What his sight that was used to the darkness could see, was that his hand was clutching a light green underwear tightly.

「.....Wait, don't tell me this is Krulcifer-san's—!?!」

Lux's blood flow accelerated drastically and his heart was pulsating as though it was jumping in his chest.

「I, I'm sorry-!?! The, then—!?!」

Lux yelled as though screaming while letting go of the underwear and exited

the room.

Thinking back now, what he entered was the dressing room for the bathing. What's more—it was the room for girls.

「Haa, haa.....why!? Why is something like this—!」

He was oozing out torrents of sweat even inside the chilly Sanctuary.

Lux returned to the sofa at the passage with waiting area, and when he was immersed in confusion.

「I wonder if you could see heaven? Hell is waiting right after it though.」

「.....-!? You are—!?」

A voice could be heard suddenly. The nun from before appeared in front of him.

The attitude of the childish sweet girl was a complete change from before, she was spotting an evil smirk.

But, the reason for Lux's surprise wasn't just that.

He had seen the girl's face and impression before.

Before he could recall it, the girl herself shed light on her true identity.

She took off her robe and veil, and a figure wearing a chic black dress appeared.

Wavy platinum hair, and a self-assured grin that contained unshakeable confidence.

One of the Seven Dragon Paladins he met at the Vanheim Principality—The Subjugator, Mel Gizalut.

「Why, are you here—!?」

Lux spontaneously blurted out. In response, Mel smiled innocently.

「My, I am the Seven Dragon Paladin of the Ymir Theocracy you know? There is nothing strange for me to go in and out of the local Sanctuary here right?」

There was no vestiges of the cherubic girl until just now, instead she was even tinged with a vaguely bewitching, glamorous atmosphere.

Therefore, Lux's doubt melted away.

The incident just now, was him getting thoroughly set up by this girl.

「Even the Black Hero of the New Kingdom is unexpectedly nothing much. Or else, are you just indulgent against children I wonder? For you to be that easily caught by this kind of classic trick.」

「Wh, why did you do something like—」

When Lux was bewildered by the chuckling Mel, the girl stood on her tiptoes and peered into Lux's face.

「Hey, I wonder, how far has your relationship with Krulcifer progressed?」

The girl suddenly asked such thing.

「E, even if you ask me such thing, that's.....」

Even while mumbling unclearly, Lux answered that question inside his heart.

A girl who was his really important friend.

Starting since he played the role as her lover, he was building a good relationship with her even after that.

As though seeing through inside the heart of such Lux, Mel brought her face even closer.

「Hmmm. It looks like you two are still not properly lovers. Although you don't look like you are that dissatisfied with that.」

「Lo, lovers? It's not like, Krulcifer-san and I are—」

Having that pointed out caused Lux's heart to skip a beat and his face reddened. It was then, 「Then, how about I help you to reconcile with her?」

Mel's expression suddenly burst into a smile that was typical for a child and she told him that.

「When Krulcifer returns, I'll defend you about the matter of your peeking. I'll tell her that it wasn't intentional, but an unfortunate accident.」

「That's, helpful but—.....wait, in the first place that was your trap right!?!」

「Just, there is a condition if you want me to do that. Can you teach me that

Krulcifer's weakness? Anything is fine so can you tell me?」

「.....Eh?」

Those unexpected words from Mel caused Lux to reflexively tilt his head.

「That's, what do you—」

「There is no particularly deep meaning. And, what will you do?」

The temptation of the girl that was like a little devil's invitation.

But, after hesitating slightly, Lux decided his answer.

「I don't know anything like that, so I cannot answer you. Let's keep this a secret from Krulcifer.」

Lux turned down the offer clearly, but Mel too didn't show any shred of agitation and scoffed.

「That's what I thought you will say. But, I wonder if your excuse will be able to persuade that girl.」

「It's not like I'm planning to frame it as though it's wholly your fault you know? I understand that half of it is my own fault.」

Lux was reflecting not just from getting tricked, but also about his own act of carelessly walking around.

In regards to that, he could only apologize sincerely.

「That's why, it's, I cannot say anything about weakness. But can you just tell me one thing? You, what is your relationship with Krulcifer-san?」

The Einvolk house was a distinguished family of great nobles in the Ymir Theocracy.

And then, Lux predicted that Mel's Gizalut house was likely also on the same level.

But, Lux couldn't see her as simply Krulcifer's aristocrat rival.

「Hee」

The eyes of Mel who saw Lux's reaction slightly widened in surprise.

「So you won't sell me out? Besides, it also looks like you aren't just a simple

pacifist who avoids rocking the boat, aren't you? For you to keep that woman's secret and probe me out instead.」

The more Lux talked with this girl named Mel, the more he understood the depth of her thoughts.

If he got tricked by her young appearance, it felt like he would meet a painful experience.

「It's not like we are making a deal—」

「It doesn't matter gentleman-san. I want to teach you the answer in deference to your interestingness, but you can just ask it from Krulcifer later. I hate explaining it or even hearing it after all.」

Mel showed a smile with deep implication before she turned her gaze to behind Lux.

When Lux turned around, there Krulcifer was standing with a somewhat conflicted expression.

「Then see you later~. Lux-oniichan!」

Mel left along with an innocent smile.

After that only Lux and Krulcifer were left behind with an awkward air between them.

「.....」

A few seconds of silence.

「Kru, Krulcifer-san!? That's, just now, eerr—」

While Lux was worrying about how to apologize, Krulcifer brushed up her hair with her usual cool-looking face.

「Let's leave that matter for later. Let's go quickly. His eminence the pope should be waiting.」

She told that to Lux calmly and started walking on the floor of the sanctuary.

Lux, too, slowly followed behind her after a moment of hesitation.

Part 2

「Krulcifer of the Einvolk house, and you are the aforementioned Lux Arcadia of the Seven Dragon Paladins. How admirable for the two of you to visit this land at this chance. Coming from afar through a long journey must be arduous.」

The audience hall was decorated with angel sculptures and radiant stained glass.

While Drag-Knight guards that were called the Sanctuary Knight Order and three bishops were standing at the side, Lux was handing over the letter from Queen Raffi while greeting Pope Nias.

(This person is, his eminence the pope of the Ymir Theocracy.....?)

He had heard the rumor, but Lux couldn't hide his surprise inside his heart.

「There is no need for consideration. God should be equally generous to all the people. You can be at ease.」

The one who told Lux that in a very formal tone was a young boy of very young age.

Although his appearance was wearing a robe for ceremony use, his whole body looked really weighty even after the dress had been modified for children use.

Of course, Lux had no intention to make light of him just because he was young.

Just, Pope Nias smiled, perhaps because he had guessed Lux's bewilderment.

「Have you heard of the rumors about me? Well, it's just as you see, I have only taken over after the previous pope. I'm not good at difficult talk. Because of that, Orphel, I'll leave the rest to you.」

「Understood.」

The one who bowed reverently and walked forward was one of the bishops who was the pope's close aide standing by at the back.

She was a young beautiful female with an intellectual look.

He heard she was a person of character who seemed to be of help to Krulcifer in the past and also had a close relationship with Mel too.

「Well then, please allow me to briefly talk about the Pilgrimage Festival that will start from tomorrow and about the matter that had us call you two here.」

With that preface, the bishop Orphel started talking about the circumstances this time.

First the pilgrimage, the visiting route would be different according to the believer's rank, and the route that the pope, whose rank was the highest among the believers, would take was the most dangerous route.

The reason was because the route would graze right beside the fourth Ruin, the Hall.

Even at the best of times the Abyss would still appear from the Ruin, and yet recently that number of appearances was also increasing.

Thus, until now the elites of the Sanctuary Knight Order that consisted of Drag-Knights would accompany the pope with a lot of guards.

But, taking into account the recent year's situation where the warmongers called Dragon Marauder were secretly maneuvering, there was also no way they could neglect the country's defenses just for the sake of the pilgrimage.

In order to make the pope's pilgrimage end smoothly while still leaving behind a combat force that could oppose any threat, it was thought that reinforcements of excellent Drag-Knights was indispensable.

「So, that means—」

Pope Nias nodded right away at Krulcifer who muttered that.

「Correct. My accompaniment for the pilgrimage this time will be the elites of the Sanctuary Knight Order and Mel Gizalut of the Seven Dragon Paladins. And then Krulcifer, you too are included.」

Even if it was a dangerous route where it would pass near the Ruin, if there was a force that included two users of Divine Drag-Ride serving as guard, then they would be able to oppose any opposition without problem.

「—That's the plan so far, but we wish to make an additional request. The Seven Dragon Paladins, Lux Arcadia. Can we ask you to also accompany the pilgrimage of his preeminence the pope?」

The words that Orphel said next caused Lux to stiffen slightly.

If asked whether it was unexpected, it was an unexpected talk.

Currently, Lux only came with the intention of accompanying Krulcifer.

But, the Seven Dragon Paladins were originally created in order for cooperation against the threat of the Abyss and Dragon Marauder.

The Ymir Theocracy, too, had no reason to hesitate for requesting cooperation.

「Of course, Ymir will pay the compensation through the New Kingdom. Besides, just by receiving this guard duty for the pilgrimage, you will be given a positive evaluation as a Drag-Knight. How about it?」

Raising his World RankWorld Grade Rank and through that increasing his influence inside the Seven Dragon Paladins was also one of Lux's objectives.

In that case, he had no reason to refuse.

「Understood. Please allow me to accompany on the pilgrimage too.」

「Oo! As expected from the representative of our allied country. You can ask about the details of the schedule from Orphel. Then, I will be relying on you from tomorrow onward.」

After Pope Nias spoke expressing his delight, the meeting was closed.

By the way, the archbishop with highest rank after Pope Nias seemed to be unable to come out because of sickness.

After that, Lux was told about the specifics of the arrangements from Bishop Orphel in a different room before he left the Sanctuary for the time being.

Perhaps because the sun would soon set, the air felt colder than before and

Lux shivered lightly—then.

「You will quickly freeze if you are forcing yourself to endure in this country you know?」

Suddenly a cape was put *pofu*- on Lux's head from the side.

The fluffy sensation from the fur seemed to be something Krulcifer prepared in advance in anticipation of this situation.

Lux was relieved from the girl's consideration while he recalled about the peeping incident.

「Ah, Krulcifer-san. That, about the matter from before—」

「You don't need to apologize anymore. It's not like I was angry about it, I was just embarrassed that's why.....」

Saying that, Krulcifer's cheeks reddened slightly while she walked ahead.

In front of the Sanctuary, Alterize was waiting with the horse carriage.

「After that, I also secretly listened to the conversation between Lux-kun and Mel.」

「Ah, uh, right.」

Krulcifer was still looking vaguely dissatisfied, but Lux was relieved that he was forgiven.

On the other hand, Krulcifer was still averting her blushing face from Lux.

「Rather than that, it was embarrassing that my unprepared side got seen by you.....」

The girl whispered like that to herself with a small voice that couldn't be heard even by Lux who was beside her.

They had just gone through a long travel, no, it couldn't be said to be that long but it still took almost the whole day. The underwear she was wearing all that time that she had finished wearing and left to be washed was taken into Lux's hand and it got seen by him.

She believed that it wasn't that dirty, even so she couldn't help but pretend to be angry.

「I wonder if I'm thinking that I don't want my embarrassing side to be seen more than earlier.....」

Krulcifer suddenly muttered with a small voice while climbing into the horse carriage.

Their schedule for tomorrow was settled, but there was one more trial that would come after this.

The homecoming after about a year and a half to Krulcifer's home—the Einvolk house.

An exhale that was slightly tinged with nervousness vanished into the empty air that was dyed white.

Part 3

「So, in the end, even headmaster was staying quiet? A matter this important—」

At the same time, in the evening.

At the Cross Field in the New Kingdom, in the headmaster's office in the Academy, several girls were intruding inside.

Because today was the holiday for the anniversary of the Academy's establishment, Relie too originally should be resting, but only for today she remained inside the headmaster office and put on a wry smile in front of her desk.

「I understand that you are shocked that Lux-kun vanished, but it's not like I have any ill will in this matter.」

In front of her wasn't just Lisha who was making a dissatisfied face.

Celistia, Philuffy, Airi, in addition even the members of the Triad, almost all of the main members of Syvalles were gathered at the same time for some reason.

The matter of Lux traveling to the Ymir Theocracy without any previous notice.

They were unable to accept it just by hearing the verbal message from Yoruka's mouth, and they intruded until the place of Relie who knew about the situation.

Like that what they were told from Relie's mouth was that originally Lux and Krulcifer were planning to depart from the New Kingdom during the night today, not yesterday.

It seemed that originally he planned to say goodbye to everyone before departing, but—

「Haa, in short we got deceived by Krulcifer-san's plan isn't it.」

Airi muttered while letting out a deep sigh that was mixed with resignation.

「Thinking back now, that opinion is highly possible.」

Relie replied lightly like that and continued the explanation.

If Lux escorted Krulcifer who was ordered to return home, there was a possibility that Lisha and the others would try to follow and drastically reduce the defensive force of Cross Field.

Therefore, she wished to depart without telling anyone until the very last second. —That was Krulcifer's original stance on the surface.

But, a deviation of a day occurred on the day before the scheduled day. Noticing that the two departed in hurry without even any time to say goodbye to everyone. Lux then hurriedly entrusted a verbal message to Yoruka—that was the circumstances of this case.

「She was totally planning it. Krulcifer missy is really too shrewd.」

「Wee-ll, it's really like her though.」

Tillfur responded to Sharis's smile, and Noct nodded at the end wordlessly.

「—And, the decider is that woman huh.」

And then Lisha glared at the corner of the room. The gazes of everyone present gathered there then.

The girl who was unusually wearing the academy's uniform—, Kirihome Yoruka was standing there.

「I was simply following Aruji-sama's order.」

Yoruka floated a bright smile and lightly turned aside the gazes.

But, Lisha walked rapidly before her eyes and then she stood in front of her while folding her arms.

「.....I wanted to ask this since some time ago, what do you think about Lux?」

「My apologies, but my principle is not to think about troublesome things.」

Yoruka's attitude was unchanged even in response to that question.

「My long cherished desire is to live for the sake of Aruji-sama and die as a tool. I already accomplished conveying the verbal message, so I'm intending to pass my time quietly just like I'm told.」

「—Irritating. It makes me astounded asking this so called servant.」

Lisha who heard that pouted her lips in dissatisfaction and she pointed with her index finger.

「You thinking that it's fine to just listen to the instruction like that conversely means that you don't have any interest whatsoever in Lux right? Because you're like that you got caught in Krulcifer's scheme. As a Drag-Knight you are fairly strong, but on the inside where it's matters, you are hollow, huh.」

「That's troubling. I don't happen to have any words in hand to reply back to that kind of emotional argument.」

「We-ll, in short Lisha-sama is saying 『Even though you also like Lux, and yet don't you get pissed of that you got tricked by Krulcifer?』, like that. She isn't being mean, so don't let it get to you okay?」

「Wha-!? Do, don't interpret it strangely as you please!? Pu, putting that aside. Now that I know Lux's location, starting from now I'll also go to the Ymir The—」

「It's unfortunate but, you cannot do that. Though I feel bad for everyone.」

When Relie said that while smiling wryly, Lisha straightened her back and puffed her chest.

「Lux is my exclusive knight you know!? That's enough reason for me to accompany him right!?!」

「No, even I cannot permit that. You, who are the princess, leaving your own country should be avoided as long as there are no very pressing reasons, is what I think.」

Celis cut in and remonstrated Lisha.

「But—」

「And so, I who am an aide of the Seven Dragon Paladins judge that I should go to check his condition.」

「—Wait, wait a second!? You are planning to go!?!」

「At the very least, I think that I am suitable for that duty though?」

「.....Haa, I thought that it would become like this.」

Relie smiled in exasperation and stared at the scene while supporting her cheek with her hand.

If there was even one person trying to go to where Lux was, the other girls would obviously raise their hand wanting to go too.

Looking at this situation, then Krulcifer's decision to depart without anyone knowing might actually be the correct course of action.

(.....But, it's nice being young isn't it.)

Being true to one's own desire, or perhaps she should call it crashing their honest feelings against each other, Relie thought of their figure that was like that as charming.

Having said that, currently she was an adult. She was in the position as a headmaster.

Originally it wasn't in Relie's principle to suppress this situation, but she had to fulfill her responsibility here.

「That's enough everyone. I forbid anyone to follow after them in the matter this time. Surely all of you are dissatisfied, but I'll take on the role to be the hated figure here. That's why—」

When Relie was going to conclude it with such firm tone,

「I also, didn't know.」

From the side, Philuffy suddenly muttered shortly with a serious face.

「Err, that, Phi.....?」

Hearing the words of the little sister she doted on, Relie reacted timidly.

「I also didn't hear anything from Nee-chan. Even though I promised, with Lu-chan to go to a new crepe shop today.」

Inside that apathetic expression and tone, the presence of clear

dissatisfaction could be sensed.

That was a blunt attitude for Philuffy who was originally poor at expressing her emotions. Even Relie was bewildered against that.

「Wha, what you are saying is also reasonable but, ca, can you endure it only for this time?」

Relie tried to soothe Philuffy somehow with a smile, but Philuffy turned her face away with ‘puih’.

「Eh.....!?!」

Philuffy kept her face averted from the petrified Relie and she didn’t even twitch with her expression staying serious.

After a bizarre silence flowed for a few seconds, before long Philuffy muttered a few words.

「.....I hate, Onee-chan.」

「-.....!?!」

The moment Relie heard that, her face that was usually quite indifferent turned pale.

She hurriedly approached in front of Philuffy, then she talked to her with trembling voice.

「Yo, you see. Thi, this can’t be helped you know? This is also unexpected for me. As expected, chasing after Lux-kun from now will be impossible, that’s why—」

「.....」

But, as expected Philuffy averted her face with ‘puih’ once more while her serious face didn’t change.

Relie who saw that stiffened as though she was turned into stone, then a few seconds later she folded.

「I, I understand! I, I’ll at least try negotiating something! Even if it’s impossible for everyone to go, at the very least I’ll make it so that Philuffy can go to the Ymir Theocracy! That’s why, don’t hate Onee-chan!」

After saying that Relie returned to her desk and began to write up a letter hurriedly.

「Just what happened with that role to be the hated figure.....?」

「Or rather, that airhead girl, isn't she actually really calculating.....?」

Celis muttered dumbfounded, followed by Lisha responding like that with a conflicted face.

Although, from the view point of the national defense, it was hard to imagine that this situation could be overturned that simply.

「I too need to think of a reason so that I can go somehow. Oi eroerotic woman, is there anything else that you know?」

While Lisha was asking Yoruka like that, Airi and the Triad members were staring at that commotion.

「.....By the way, this is just in case. But if they are able to go to Ymir, can we also go along with them I wonder. Look, we will be like extra assistants or something!」

「No. You can think of it as definitely impossible. Or rather, you should hide your true intention a bit.」

「Unfortunately there is nothing you can do but give up. Well, I too will be lying if I said that I don't want to at least show my face.」

Tillfur said jokingly, but Noct and Sharis easily admonished her.

Inside the headmaster's office that was filled with the tumult of the girls, Airi sighed with reproachful eyes.

「Everyone, are really a pain isn't it.....」

Everyone had the position as aristocrats in their own way, and they were also outstanding and powerful Drag-Knights. And yet, when it came to Lux, they were like children.

(Well, there won't be any persuasiveness even if I say anything though.)

She had no skill to control a Drag-Ride despite her aptitude for it. In a sense that might be fortunate.

She was putting up a calm front but, actually she was the one who was the most—wanting to meet her big brother Lux.

(I'm also, a pain as a little sister.....)

Airi whispered inside her heart and stared once more at the commotion before her eyes.

The situation was slowly moving in the New Kingdom too.

Part 4

On the other side, at the Holy Capital of the Ymir Theocracy where the sun almost set.

Lux stopped by at an inn together with Krulcifer and prepared for their visit to the Einvolk house.

The home of Krulcifer, who was a daughter of a count, was in another territory, but on days like this, where the day when there would be a ceremony was close, the family would move into their secondary residence in the Holy Capital.

First, Lux and Krulcifer put their appearances in order as the preliminary arrangements before visiting that house.

Normally he had a close relationship with the girls at the Academy like with Lisha or Philuffy, so he almost forgot, but the arrangement of nobles was basically troublesome.

「.....Yosh, something like this is fine I think?」

Lux who changed from the academy uniform into a black dress suit looked at the mirror while whispering.

This attire was also something Krulcifer prepared for him, but it looked excessively expensive, so he didn't dare to ask the price.

This kind of full dress reminded him completely of his time as a member of the Old Empire's imperial family. For Lux he also felt a bit not used to it but—

「Can you show your appearance to me too? Let's check each other's attire.」

「Uwah!?!」

The voice that Lux suddenly heard caused him to look beside him in panic.

Krulcifer wearing a graceful dress with her shoulders slightly visible was

standing there.

The black fabric that gave the impression of elegant smoothness made her white skin appear even more prominent. A small silverwork accompanied her as a reserved decoration.

While it was an outfit with little showiness, it didn't harm the intelligent charm she possessed at all.

No matter how he looked at her, she looked completely like a count's daughter.

「It has been a long time since I returned home, that's why I'm worried whether I'm wearing this well.」

After saying that, Krulcifer coolly brushed up her hair. Seeing that, Lux unconsciously became dazed.

Lux noticed that she was looking for his impression and he raised his voice in hurry.

「It really suits you, Krulcifer-san.」

「Is that so? Thank you. But, as for you it's still coming a bit short.」

Krulcifer approached Lux who was smiling awkwardly and she slowly brought her face closer.

Lux was bewildered seeing that bewitching smile brought closer to him.

「Wai-, Krr, Krulcifer-san!?!」

Their lips would touch with just one more push—it was a distance where their chests almost clung to each other.

The moment Lux became aware of the nice smell of her hair, her slender fingers touched Lux's chest.

「Uwah.....!?!」

「Come on, don't move. Your collar is slightly off.」

With just a single whisper, Krulcifer stole Lux's movement ability.

After slightly pinching the chest part of his shirt, she lightly adjusted its shape.

「Okay, I'm finished. With this you too became a really cool prince.」

「Tha, thank you.....」

He thought that it was a bit exaggerated, but he didn't feel bad getting praised by her. His face turned completely red.

(Wait, isn't this, aren't our positions reversed here.....?)

When they were alone together, Krulcifer led him around by the nose just like always.

But perhaps it was thanks to that both of them could relax somewhat from their tension.

While he was thinking that, Krulcifer suddenly turned her back towards him.

「My, it's a bad hobby to peek you know, Alterize.」

「N, no-!? I'm coming only to take a look at the situation!」

Krulcifer's teasing caused the female butler looking at the two of them from the corridor to respond in panic.

「I, it will soon be the time for the visit. If we are too late in coming, it will become time for dinner.」

Alterize awkwardly averted her eyes from the two with her cheeks still faintly blushing.

The girl had an image as a steady bulter, but it seemed she was estranged from the matter of romance.

「If you are jealous, how about you also find a lover?」

「Tha, that's not true, I'm arranged to have a marriage interview someday and then marry anyway, so I'll refrain from that.」

After saying that with a red face, Alterize exited the inn and headed to the horse carriage.

After that only Lux and Krulcifer were left behind.

「Come to think of it Krulcifer-san. How did you tell about the matter of us two to your family?」

Lux asked because Alterize's reaction when the word 'lover' was said caught his attention.

A few months ago, in order to avoid an undesirable engagement, Krulcifer requested Lux to play the role as her lover.

The act itself went well and her engagement with Balzeride of the Four Great Nobles was discarded, but at that occasion, Alterize misunderstood that Krulcifer was engaged to Lux.

In the end, in regards to that matter it was ambiguous until now, but,

「.....」

Krulcifer was thinking with a serious look for a full few seconds, which was rare for her, and then,

「There is no use for you to be bothered by such trivial things. Now, let's go.」

「Wait!? That's a really important problem you know!? Just what is going on with our relationship!?!」

「Lux-kun wants me to say such embarrassing things from my mouth huh. As long as we understand each other's feelings, it doesn't matter what other people call our relationship right?!」

「Why are you trying to conclude it with such nice sounding words like that!? At the very least, my question here isn't going through you know!?!」

「Lux-kun, do you hate me?!」

Suddenly Krulcifer's tone fell and she showed a serious face.

「Eh.....?!」

Her ice colored pupils that were tinged with gloominess shook in loneliness and moistened.

Lux who saw that felt a slight pain in his chest.

He hurriedly shook his head on the spot.

「N, no such thing at all! There is no way I'll ever hate Krulcifer-san——」

When Lux immediately said that with a serious face, Krulcifer chuckled and

walked away.

「I see, thank you. I also like you Lux-kun. Then let's ride the horse carriage now that you understand.」

「.....」

Lux's reaching out hand wandered in empty air and stiffened.

He was completely, played.....

「Also Lux-kun. A warning for you, you are a bit too soft-hearted. That's also your good side but, you should at least be careful right after getting tricked by Mel.」

「That's cruel! Krulcifer-san!」

Lux spontaneously yelled in response to her teasing smile.

Alterize who was made to wait under the cold weather was staring at them with a reproachful gaze.

After that the horse carriage ran for a few minutes, then before long it moved out from the bulky townscape made of stone into an area where a lot of houses modeled after a church could be seen.

Most likely it was the residential area where believers with deep faith were living.

Inside a ground that was conspicuously large even in that area, there was a palatial residence.

「In order to defend against cold, it was built with corridors established at the outer side, so it's not as spacious as the appearance suggests.」

Krulcifer added such explanation, but Lux thought that the building was huge even after taking that into account.

It was a three storey residence with overlapping pointing roofs that were slanted diagonally, perhaps in order to let the piling up snow fall.

The second floor had more windows than the first floor, most likely because when the winter came the snow would bury them.

This was the Einvolk house that was a distinguished family of the Ymir

Theocracy. It was said that it also had deep connections with the Sanctuary Knight Order that was the army of the country.

Even while feeling like he would be swallowed by nervousness, Lux passed through the gate together with Krulcifer.

「We have been waiting for your arrival Ojou-sama. The family head is presently waiting.」

When they entered inside the residence, two maids welcomed them.

The living room they were taken to had beautiful furniture and furnishings lining up, and a flame was blazing brightly inside the hearth.

「I've returned home, Otou-samafather. Are you in good health?」

Krulcifer bowed respectfully and said that.

Krulcifer didn't give the impression that her relation with her family was going well, so Lux was anxious inside his heart, but for the time being her father was responding calmly.

「Aa, my daughter, I've put you through some trouble at this chance.」

A man in his prime with a moustache growing—Stiyl Einvolk was the head of the house and also her adopted father.

His stern and sharp gaze was just as expected from the head of a military family.

「It's an honor to meet you for the first time. I am Krulcifer-san's classmate and the Seven Dragon Paladin of the New Kingdom, Lux Arcadia. I will be in your care in this time.」

After Lux also made a formal greeting, the people of the Einvolk family, the other family members who also came to the capital at present showed their faces.

The one who introduced himself as the eldest son, Zain, if he had to be represented with few words, then he was a typical noble heir.

His looks were well ordered, but he looked vaguely feeble and clad with an atmosphere that gave the hint of gloominess.

To say positively, he looked stoic which was becoming for a Sanctuary Knight Order, but obstinacy which was lacking of adaptability could also be felt.

The third daughter, Yunifa had a good manner and also ladylike image, but her smile was somewhat formal, making one conscious of her mask as a noble daughter.

The fourth daughter Irma was silent and obedient. She gave the impression of a girl who had led a sheltered life.

It seemed that there were still another three people who were of direct family, but the family members who were spending their time in the capital for the Pilgrimage Festival this time were only everyone here.

Because of Lux's status as a former prince of the Old Empire, added with his rough livelihood that spanned for five years, he was used to getting attention, but even so he was quite nervous.

Just, the gazes they were watching him with felt more like pure curiosity rather than appraising him.

「So you are Lux Arcadia. I have heard of you from our butler Alterize. I heard that you are an excellent Drag-Knight, and you have deep relationships with the daughters of important nobles of the New Kingdom even with your status as criminal.」

When everyone's self-introduction was finished, the family head Stiyl called out to him.

Alterize who served as the connecting pipe between Krulcifer and the Einvolk house was endorsing the matter of Lux positively to the house.

But,

「However, excuse my rudeness, but I cannot see you as someone who is possessing the quality as high as the report that I received. There is also your status as a criminal, and your quality as a Drag-Knight too, I heard that you had only just gotten promoted to Middle Class. About how you were appointed as the Seven Dragon Paladin of the New Kingdom too, I suspected that there is more to it behind the scenes.」

He was doubting that Lux's position was received not from real skill, but because the princess Lizsharte who Lux was close with was making arrangements, so perhaps everything was just some kind of political move.

Lux didn't particularly harbor any animosity against Stiyl's accusation itself.

After all in the first place, seen from the side Lux's position was just too peculiar.

Currently he was a former imperial family member of the Old Empire that should have the role to be hated, the criminal of the New Kingdom.

At the same time in the new kingdom, he received the royal order of the princess and obtained a special status and post.

There was something behind that strange chain of events—it was only natural for anyone to be cautious like that.

But, Alterize who endorsed Lux as a fiancé candidate immediately raised her voice to object.

「My lord, that's—」

「That's impolite Alterize. Right now father is in the middle of talking.」

The eldest son, Zain, stopped her like that and Alterize shut her mouth.

In exchange, Krulcifer beside Lux lifted her face.

「Is that so? But Otou-sama, it will be troubling if you cannot believe it just because you didn't see the process after driving me away out of sight. If Otou-sama has dissatisfactions towards him, then can I ask you to please say it clearly?」

「.....」

Stiyl kept silent against the objection of the girl that was calm to the end.

At a glance, this was a confrontation of a distinguished noble father and his adopted daughter.

Only looking to that extent, there wasn't anything particularly strange from this scene, but Lux became bothered by a certain thing.

「.....Excuse me, Krulcifer-san?」

Lux dropped his tone until the very limit and whispered towards Krulcifer-san besides him.

「What is it Lux-kun? Right now I'm in the middle of war, so if possible please postpone it for later.」

Seeing how she immediately responded back like that with a small voice, it seemed that she still had composure.

「About that, from hearing the flow of the talk, could it be they are misunderstanding, that I am still Krulcifer-san's fiancée?」

「.....」

Krulcifer fell silent with a serious expression still fixed on her face.

「It's not a misunderstanding. Because I made it so that they perceived it like that.」

「Wait a second!? Krulcifer-san!」

Lux reflexively yelled when she said that without hesitation. The father Stiyl and the eldest brother Zain slightly glared at Lux who acted like that.

Lux who noticed the glares hurriedly closed his mouth.

The two little sisters were watching over the course of events acting like it was unrelated to them.

Inside the oppressive air, only the crackling sound from the hearth continued to fill the air.

(.....Is it as I thought, that Krulcifer-san's relationship with her family isn't really good? But)

‘What's with this atmosphere.....?’, Lux felt something strangely out of place.

First, even though they disregarded the adopted daughter who was discovered inside the Ruin, their attitude was slightly too strict. And second—

「You have heard about the talk of you accompanying his eminence the pope's pilgrimage as a guard haven't you? Including you and Zain, there are several names from our Einvolk house who are members of the Sanctuary Knight Order who will participate too.」

「Yes. He too will participate in it as a Seven Dragon Paladin.」

When Krulcifer answered like that, Stiyl nodded and continued.

「I see, if that's the case then the talk will be quick. If he really has that much caliber and skill, then I want to have you raise an achievement to a certain degree as a guard in this pilgrimage.」

「What does that mean?」

「It's exactly as it sounds. Looking from the state of the Ruin in these recent years, in the pilgrimage route that his eminence will follow, the Abyss will surely appear. If you can obtain meritorious deeds and raise achievements there as a member of the Einvolk house, I will listen to some of your willfulness. It will also become a chance to understand the true strength of him who helps you.」

The letter that called Krulcifer back this time was for the sake of the guard mission during the pilgrimage.

And then, in addition there was the talk that demanded Krulcifer and also Lux to make some accomplishment.

It was too much of a businesslike demand for this family reunion after a long time.

Even so Krulcifer's calm expression didn't crumble.

「Does that mean, that this is the last job before I'm driven off as a nuisance? It can't be helped.」

「Krulcifer-san, that's—」

「I'm sorry Lux-kun. I've made you accompany me for this long talk. Then, please excuse us for the moment. Guide him to his room, Alterize.」

「Ye, yes-!」

A short pause later, Alterize moved with an anxious look.

Without pause they exited the living room and headed to the third floor. Lux was shown to the guest room he was assigned to.

Lux parted with Krulcifer and the others for the moment until dinner and he took a rest.

「Fuu.....」

First, he put down his luggage inside the room. Then he sighed lightly.

Looking once more, he thought that it was a nice room.

Furniture were put inside the space that was moderately spacious. The large bed with feather blanket on it was also pleasant.

The room had also been cleaned, he didn't find a single dust.

But, as expected, when he thought back to the exchange just now, he couldn't really relax.

「Raise achievements as a guard in the pilgrimage, and obtain meritorious deeds at this chance, huh.....」

By the time they visited the Sanctuary, he could imagine that the reason Krulcifer was called back was most likely for being the pope's guard.

However, inside Lux there was still something that bothered him.

The reason for the coldness from the Einvolk house's family members, was that the only reason he wondered.

Because Krulcifer was an adopted daughter whose origin was from the Ruin.

And then because as a Drag-Knight, she possessed outstanding talent that stood out from the crowd even among the Einvolk house.

Perhaps those were the reasons.

However, he felt like those weren't the only reasons.

「—Or rather, in the end, what's going on about the matter of the engagement with me!?!」

As soon as the dinner was finished, he had to ask Krulcifer about it. Lux thought so, but Lux had the premonition that she would say this and that and give him the slip, which caused him to be at his wits' end.

Part 5

- katsun, katsun*

Footsteps echoed inside a dark corridor.

After getting down a stone stair, an open space spread out ahead.

Inside the room that was surrounded by countless bookshelves, a large table and numerous experiment utensils were lined up in fixed order.

The New Kingdom's Cross Field. This was the laboratory existing underground the library inside the Academy's grounds.

「Having a meeting in this kind of tasteless room, I'm really looked down here huh. I was having expectations because this is a reunion after several years, but I wonder if the Aingram conglomerate is declining?」 (TN: The person here is using 'washi' to refer to herself. 'Washi' is usually used by elderly males.

Anyone who read Magika, Futsunushi no Kami also used 'washi') It was the room where Lux and Airi once received explanation regarding the horn flute.

There, Relie Aingram and a girl were standing side by side.

「I really wished to give you the proper hospitality, but unfortunately I also really cannot do that. Especially in the recent years, we don't know where the enemy might be.」

「.....Dragon Marauder huh, what a really troublesome bunch. Thanks to them the price of things are fluctuating furiously. My business is also in a bad state.」

「That kind of glib talk won't work with me you know? You must have predicted emergency demands in that kind of field already since a long time ago anyway, right about now you are making a killing right?」

「What a terrible woman. Even though I am merely protecting my beloved company.」

The girl—no, she looked young, but she was a blooming female with almost the same age as Relie, she who responded like that grinned widely with a predatory smile.

A part of her blond hair that was tinged orange was formed into a loop. It was a characteristic hair style.

Regardless, it really suited the atmosphere of the girl who possessed both dignity and also pretense without anything feeling out of place.

She wore stacked up fabric of black and red with golden embroidery, while several small pouches were fastened around her waist.

It was a custom made attire that stressed beauty while also endowed with the beauty of function.

A bizarre appearance that looked like the combination of a noble daughter's attire and the work clothes of a merchant.

What was standing out from amidst that appearance was the sword belt of a Sword Device carried on her waist.

「—And, today what kind of ulterior motive you have, catching this world's most beautiful girl? Though at the surface you were talking about something like national defense.」

The self-proclaimed beauty showed a somewhat crooked grin and looked up at Relie beside her.

Normally Relie would make a retort at the woman calling herself 'girl' while making frivolous talk, but this time Relie was silent instead.

The world's biggest company faction that ruled at the top across dozens of countries, the Vanfrick company.

Relie was silent because she wanted to ask a favor of that woman who was the boss of the Vanfrick company.

「My bad but, I cannot answer your expectations today. Actually this isn't something that should be said from my mouth but, this is really a talk about national defense. What's more—this is concerning the world.」

Relie muttered that and put a sheet of a written report on the desk.

In it was written the report of a man who was a spy of Dragon Marauder, and the result that the higher-ups of the royal capital deciphered.

Dilwy Froias.

He was a military officer who searched for the secret medicine of the Ruin that Dragon Marauder possessed—the Elixir, and betrayed the New Kingdom for it.

A letter that recorded his exchange with Dragon Marauder was discovered as the result from searching his room.

「.....Hoo, so those guys' next target is the Theocracy huh. However what a risky season. Even if they noticed the leak of this information, there is a possibility that they will still cause trouble.」

One of their aims in order to accomplish their plan—to tear down countries, existed in the Ymir Theocracy.



The exact date and time were unclear, but aiming at the chance when the protection of the country was divided between the Holy Capital and the pope when the Pilgrimage Festival was going on was the natural conclusion.

But, from the view point of national defense, mobilizing a large army for the sake of an allied country was difficult.

「Yes..... But I'm holding a certain kind of belief. No matter what their objective is, most likely it has the meaning of causing conflict.」

The Dragon Marauder, and the influential people supporting them were putting up a will of opposition to rebel against the large countries.

At present, they should be aiming to lower the national power of a country by poking at the Ruins and expose cities to the flame of war.

「They don't question the right and wrong of the outcome. Or rather, they will be able to accomplish a part of their objective.....so it's something like that. And then, what are you wishing from me, your old friend?」

「I want to borrow your strength for a little while. In exchange, a force to save the Theocracy will be sent from this Academy. I already contacted the top, they said that they won't mind if that's possible.」

The female merchant grinned fearlessly in response to Relie's dispassionate mutter.

「So you're coming like that. You too are quite reckless huh, getting into a debt with this me. Well, I can mostly predict why you are doing that though. —Is my favorite disciple doing well?」

「I cannot deny that, but this isn't simply for my little sister's sake. I also have to pay back my debt to him.」

Relie smoothly muttered that and she spread out the contract she prepared.

「Lux Arcadia, huh. I heard the rumor, but it seems he is quite the remarkable character isn't he. I also heard that his looks is easy on the eye for woman. I'm looking forward to the time this eye will be able to catch sight of him.」

The blooming woman muttered that and she quickly signed the contract in consent.

It seemed like the woman was licking her lips subtly, but Relie smiled wryly and pretended not to see it.

She was a beautiful woman who was strong and veteran, but she was someone who was loyal to her own desires.

She especially didn't discriminate with younger males with beautiful looks. Relie had even heard a rumor that this woman employed people of such disposition and put them at her surroundings to serve her.

In that kind of meaning, she didn't want Lux to meet this woman when it was likely that he would be her preference.

(Though as expected, it's only this matter that it can't be helped.)

In any case, someday Lux would surely meet this woman, who it wouldn't be an exaggeration even if she was called as the one ruling over the world from behind the scenes.

With her current status, she was in an extremely close position to Lux.

Before that happens, she had no other way except making Lux's relationship with Philuffy into something secure.

「Then, please move immediately from tomorrow. I'll leave the protection of the New Kingdom to you, Magialca.」

The beauty only responded to that with a composed smile.

The secret plan was already starting to move.

Episode 2 – Pilgrimage Festival

Part 1

- GOON* Such solemn bell sound rang several times since early morning.

Similar with new kingdom and other countries, a bell tower was built in the middle of city in preparation for Abyss's attack, but this time a calm timbre could be heard only as a part of ceremony.

「Fu, aa.....」

Lux was very nervous staying for a night in Einfeld house, but he could sleep better than he thought. It must be because of the long travel.

「After finishing breakfast, put your attire in order and we will depart to the sanctuary. How is your body's condition?」

「I'm all right. After sleeping for a night, my fatigue is mostly gone.」

After changing clothes from his sleeping wear, Krulcifer made her appearance.

Last night it felt like she was relatively worked up, but this morning she had returned to her usual self.

They had beaten the brief of the program of Pilgrimage Festival that they would accompany as the guard of Pope Nias into their head.

The total time including today would be a period of three days. The flow of event would be touring to several holy grounds at the holy capital and its surrounding and performed ceremony there.

The accompaniment would be one bishop and several believers who acted as attendant, and also the elites of Sanctuary Knight Order with total of thirty names.

In addition was Lux and Krulcifer, and Ymir Theocracy's Seven Dragon Paladins, Mel Gizalut.

By the way Krulcifer's step-brother, Zain Einfolk would also serve as guard as a member of Sanctuary Knight Order.

The two went down to first floor and took breakfast inside the wide living room.

Piping hot soup cooked together with bread, smoked bacon topped with omelet, salad with grated cheese, and then tea with honey. After having breakfast, they put their attire in order.

They then rode horse carriage for ten-odd minutes and they arrived once more in front of the sanctuary.

「Well then young master and Ojou-sama, also Lux-sama, take care.」

The butler Alterize saw them off until in front of the sanctuary.

「No need for worry. This is only trivial matter.」

The eldest brother Zain didn't meet the eyes of Lux and Krulcifer as usual, but he also didn't particularly say anything bad. They headed toward the government office building inside the ground.

Until the preparation for the departure was finished, they would stand by inside the guard cabin that had hearth in it.

The inside of the cabin was fairly wide. A server handed them tea and a quiet time flowed.

Perhaps the other officials were preparing themselves for the ceremony performance, because someone was picking up a religious book, while someone else was offering prayer toward empty air.

「.....」

For the moment, the three of them grouped together as people related to

Einfolk house, but the eldest brother Zain looked like he was in a bad mood.

「It looks like there is a delay. I'll look at the situation outside for a bit.」

Suddenly Krulcifer looked outside the window and muttered that.

The moment she left her seat, the eldest brother Zain opened his mouth.

「Lux Arcadia, that's your name right? If I remember correctly, just the other day it seemed that you were appointed as the new kingdom's Seven Dragon Paladins, isn't that right?」

「Err....., yes.」

Even while feeling slightly perplexed, Lux replied with a serious expression.

「—Why did you come here?」

「What do you mean?」

Lux tilted his head toward those words that were said to him with half-closed eyes.

「I heard that it seems you are also the exclusive knight of the new kingdom's princess . Could it be that you were given the order to lend some favor to your allied country?」

Perhaps the slightly strong tone was also transmitted to the surrounding, because the other Sanctuary Knight Order and believers lowered their voice and Lux could feel them observing this way.

「No, I only wanted to accompany Krulcifer-san with my own personal intent.」

But, Lux said that honestly and he looked at Zain's face.

The other side was slightly bewildered and returned back a dubious gaze at him.

「I can't understand that, purposefully coming so far until another country with only that reason. In that case are you virtuous philanthropist? Or else, did you foresee that our Einfolk house has that much value?」

「It's neither of them.」

Most people would take Zain's words as provocation, but Lux answered

calmly without delay.

「At the very least, I was always helped by her kindness at the new kingdom. That's why, if I can be of assistance for her, then I too won't hesitate to do just so. That's all there is to it.」

「Fuh, so it's something like that?」

「Yes, it's something like that.」

Lux responded with a smile even toward that somewhat careless respond mixed with sarcasm in it.

But, even then Zain's attitude didn't change.

「And, you are a fiancée candidate? But, I wonder if you can say something like that when you don't know about that woman's circumstance.」

「.....? Just now, what—」

When Lux reflexively tilted his head toward Zain's muttering that implicated something, 「I think it's not really something that goes as far as interfering with other country's circumstance you know, Onii-sama.」

「—!?」

The voice that suddenly interjected caused Lux and Zain to freeze.

When they looked, Krulcifer had returned into the guard cabin without them realizing it.

「It looks like we will depart soon. We the guards ought to stand by outside too.」

「Hmph.....」

Zain showed a shocked expression for a moment, but he immediately scoffed a bit and left the cabin.

The other Sanctuary Knight Order members also stood up and slowly began to move.

「My brother has troubled you just now. I'm sorry.」

Krulcifer leaked out a small sigh and muttered that.

「It's okay, but—」

Lux shook his head while recalling the conversation just now.

Zain's somewhat thorny reaction must be related with the matter that he had heard from Krulcifer.

While she was an adopted child, she showed excessive talent in Einfolk house. Because of that there might be jealousy toward her.

But, what Lux felt from Zain just now wasn't only that.

「Uwah」

- pofu-*. Suddenly a fur hat was put on his head. Lux returned to his senses.

「It's heavy outfit for the use of Sanctuary Knight Order to protect from cold. Because I forgot to borrow for Lux-kun's share.」

After saying that, Krulcifer who was wearing fur coat above the aforementioned chic dress headed outside.

When Lux followed behind her and got out of the cabin, Krulcifer who was walking in front of him muttered.

「Don't listen too much to my brother's story. It's not like we are quarreling openly, but I don't know when it will become the trigger for dispute.」

「Yes....., I get it.」

Lux thought that it was a bit unfortunate while he replied like that with a wry smile.

「—But, thank you for saying a cold human like me is kind.」

「.....」

The faint smile she suddenly showed to him caused Lux to fall into illusion as though his heart was shot through.

Krulcifer was always cool and showed a composed smile, but exactly because of that, he thought that her expression smiling happily was really cute.

That lovely expression that felt like a surprise attack caused Lux to almost

forget to breath.

「Let's go Lux-kun. His eminence the pope is waiting.」

This time Krulcifer told him with a casual smile just like usual.

Lux nodded to that and the two of them hurried to the waiting horse carriage.

The first day of pilgrimage to go around the decided holy grounds started.

Having said that, this travel where they were looking around several places around the holy capital became a day trip.

Fundamentally they were using horse carriage as method of travel, but it seemed that sometimes they would use Drag-Ride for moving.

The first pilgrimage destination was the holy capital's southeast.

The objective was to offer a prayer at a deserted temple in a forest.

While sitting inside the shaking horse carriage, Lux was listening to Krulcifer's story regarding the origin of Ymir Theocracy and its doctrine.

「Then, in Ymir Theocracy, that god and angel become the object of worship?」

「It's basically something like that.」

Desert, fierce blizzard—or perhaps flood. Territory with that kind of hardship.

In that kind of rigorous environment, there was a tendency that faith would be firmly rooted because controlling the self and people would be done by borrowing the name of god.

When he was a child, Lux learned that from the library of the old empire, but it seemed that in Ymir Theocracy, there was a slightly different reason for the religion here.

「But, it's not only that. There is a legend, that this land that was once locked inside snow and ice was saved by god and angel.」

「Legend.....?」

Lux muttered that and fell silent. Krulcifer smiled wryly seeing that.

「Yes, in this world there is a god that won't descend no matter what. God will dispatch angel when he bestow words or things to human. The angel would

conduct various assistance to human, and saved people who are suffering from disaster. In fact, there is a legend of human talking with that angel, and directly asked, 『Where is god』—the human asked.」

The angel's answer was like this.

『God is inside all of you.』

『From far away in the past that not one of you remember, you all received the divine protection of god and then you were born.』

God was watching human's deed, and one day he would dispatch angel to them again, the legend said.

「Well, until this point it's a story that you can find anywhere. But, it's really rare though for a story where human talk directly with angel. After all normally it would be more, angel keeping distance from human in regard to their divine status.」

「That might be so.」

While talking like that, they arrived at the destination. They got down from the carriage and took their post.

Pope Nias and the bishop headed to the deepest room and set up the ritual equipments, it seemed that the ceremony's main part would start from here.

Suddenly, several Sanctuary Knight Order members came toward where Lux and Krulcifer were at. Perhaps they had finished their formation.

It seemed that they were elderly knights and acquaintances of Krulcifer.

「Oo. So you are accompanying this mission as expected, it has been a long time, daughter of Einfolk house.」

「I say, has it been a year? Did you meet any inconvenience living in the new kingdom?」

「Yes, in the new kingdom I am able to spend productive days both in literary and military arts.」

Krulcifer greeted them while sending Lux an apologetic gaze.

When one was a member of distinguished noble family, they would surely

have various other acquaintances.

It seemed that Krulcifer's reception outside the Einfeld house was good, she was surrounded by several military officers.

Lux who was a former imperial family guessed that and he distanced himself so not to hinder her—.

「Good afternoon! Onii-chan!」

「Wah!」

Suddenly a girl slammed on Lux's waist.

Lux blinked his eyes in surprise and found Mel Glzalut there.

She was even more petite than Lisha with a body build that apt to be mistaken as a young child.

But, this girl who was a Seven Dragon Paladins also had a dangerous atmosphere and a somewhat mature allure.

「As I thought Onii-chan also camee. What do you think? About the Pilgrimage Festival of Ymir Theocracy.」

「Err.....」

Mel showed an innocent smile and said that with an upturned gaze.

Looking from just that, she looked like a cute child, but he couldn't let his guard down.

It was only the other day too, he had just gotten duped by her.

「I think that it's boring but endure it okay? Rather than that, that Ojou-sama over there. She is popular like always isn't shee.」

But Mel didn't really bother with that bewilderment of Lux and she turned her gaze toward Krulcifer.

She was staring at the girl who was conversing with nobles at slight distance away, and then at another person, Krulcifer's big brother, Zain Einfeld standing alone by himself.

「—How ironic isn't it. That the result of the tournament at that time is still

becoming a reason that girl is estranged in Einfeld house.」

Her lovely expression turned into a fearless look and she muttered that.

It was her face as a Seven Dragon Paladins that Lux previously saw.

「What do you mean by that?」

「It's about military arts tournament. In this Ymir Theocracy, that's the largest Drag-Ride tournament. It's something like the new kingdom's Tournament Official Mock Battle that is in the top position I guess.」

Since Drag-Ride was discovered, mock battle was held in various countries although there was a degree of difference between them.

Most likely this military arts tournament held that role in Ymir Theocracy.

「My house—Gizalut house and Einfeld house are famous military family that are the main support of this country. Two years ago, I fought Krulcifer at the final of the military arts tournament.」

「Then, what you mean by her being estranged because of that case is—」

Was Krulcifer unable to answer the expectation of Einfeld house and lost at that time?

「No, that's not it.」

Mel saw through Lux's question and told him so.

「The one who lost was me. Although it was losing by decision just barely. However—」

「I've made you wait. The ceremony will start soon, you will get scolded if you make pointless chat you know?」

「Krulcifer, san.....」

Without noticing Krulcifer had returned to Lux's position. Her composed face gazed at Mel.

In contrast Mel Gizalut looked as though she wasn't bothered by that, she smiled at Lux beside him.

「Before this, I asked you about Krulcifer's weak point right?」

The girl let loose the allure of a young female and told Lux that with a bewitching smile.

「I'll teach you my objective. I want to pay back my defeat at that time during this Pilgrimage Festival. Look forward to it okay, Onii-chan.」

Mel only said that and left quietly.

After that Krulcifer sighed in exasperation. She was left alone with Lux.

「It's really not a nice feeling having your past failure got tattled on.」

「That's, so it's as I thought.....」

「Quietly, it will start soon.」

Lux noticed from Krulcifer's whisper.

Pope Nias who was illuminated by the glow of the bonfire was spinning a ritual prayer in front of the believers.

After that two ceremonies were finished without any incident and the first day of the pilgrimage signaled a safe end.

Part 2

After breaking up in front of the sanctuary, Lux and Krulcifer didn't return directly to Einfeld house, they stopped by at a restaurant in the holy capital for having a meal as well as taking rest.

Quiet and graceful atmosphere was flowing, appropriate for a distinguished high class restaurant even in the holy capital.

In the spacious dining hall that looked like a dance hall, a lot of waiters were busily walking on the red carpet. On the stage an instrumentalist was playing a harp.

The steamed fish wrapped in herb and steak garnished with fruit sauce were quiet flavorful, even Lux was enjoying them while eating it.

「Tomorrow we will have guard duty too, so we cannot drink alcohol, but in this situation I actually want wine too.」

Even such a whisper sounded appropriate for Krulcifer, but as expected it felt like she was meeker than usual.

「Krulcifer-san. Can I hear more about the detail of what I was told at the afternoon?」

When Lux said that with consideration, the girl let out a small sigh 'fuu' and she started talking.

The military arts tournament that was once held in this country.

In the final, she defeated Mel Gizalut. How did that fact connect to failure?

「I had talked before about my position in Einfeld house and the sequence of events there hadn't I?」

It was the happening a few months ago that he wouldn't forget.

Inside the Ruin, Garden, he heard about Krulcifer's past from herself.

When she was a child, she noticed that she was an adopted child of the Einfeld house.

In order to close the distance between herself with her family that wasn't related to her by blood, she continued to work hard in every field.

But, the result of her showing her excellence like that was that she was estranged from her brother and sisters, and a gulf was created between them.

「Even so, I couldn't give up completely. But at a certain time, a decisive incident happened. That was—the military arts tournament of Drag-Knight that was held in this country.」

Krulcifer muttered that with an expression that was somewhat despondent.

「At the military art tournament two years ago, Mel who debuted there was an amateur who had only just learned Drag-Ride control. Even so she overwhelmed the other Drag-Knights. Including our family's—Zain-niisan too.」

「—!?」

Lux was spontaneously speechless from surprise hearing that fact.

Although female had advantage in the point of their Drag-Ride aptitude value, a girl who had only just learned control with practically no experience defeated Zain who should be someone who was already experienced and advanced until the final.

In other words Mel was without a doubt blessed with the quality of natural genius.

That meant that she possessed talent that was towering above the rest in order to become Drag-Knight by nature.

「I fought her using EX Wyvern. The me at that time intended to shoulder Einfeld house on my own accord. Even though no one, not even my family said anything to me about it, I challenged the fight under the impression that I mustn't lose.」

The side profile of Krulcifer who was drinking the after-meal tea looked vaguely lonely and self-deprecating.

「Like that, the match was.....」

「Yes, it's just as that girl said, I won thanks to the difference of the Drag-Ride's spec and experience. At that time, I felt proud inside my heart. A person who won the military arts tournament will be given high position even within the Sanctuary Knight Order. They can even receive the prize of a Divine Drag-Ride. I was thinking happily, that I had protected the family name. But—」

「.....」

‘Aa, so that's it.’

Even Lux understood the implication of that.

Zain, the eldest son of Einfolk house, a military family that was a pillar of the country, was defeated by Mel of Gizart house who was still a child.

Even so if Mel became the overall champion, Zain's honor would be barely maintained.

But, that Mel was defeated by Krulcifer who was of the same house with him.

The up-and-coming Drag-Knight of Gizart house that was defeated by his little sister. Like that it was as though the eldest son was a real weakling that wasn't no match at all against them.

It wasn't hard to imagine the hardship that the eldest brother Zain experienced since that day.

Most likely even Einfolk house also underestimated Krulcifer's skill.

If that wasn't the case, that kind of tragedy wouldn't happen.

「After that, it was just like I told you. I received Divine Drag-Ride Fafnir as prize, a while after that, following a certain incident, it was decided that I would study abroad at the new kingdom.」

And then now, she was suddenly called back to be given the role as a guard in the Pilgrimage Festival.

「I'm sorry. I'm making you listening to this tedium story even though we finally have a nice dinner—. There is still time, so is it okay if I stop by in a shop at our way back?」

「Yes. I'll also keep you company.」

After that, Lux listened from her about her memory when she was living at the monastery she was attending.

Perhaps it was just as expected, it seemed that even in the past she was an excellent student, and she was relied a lot by her classmates and juniors.

It appeared that with the exception of the awkwardness in her home, she spent a sound period as a young lady.

After that using horse carriage, they went around to several places like tailor or accessory shop before they were stopped by Alterize who was making exasperated face and returned to Einfolk's home.

「My apologies Lux-sama. You were led around by Ojou-sama like that while you are tired.」

「No, I was also having fun. After all if it's not a time like this, I would always get employed to do chores.」

「I feel a bit relieved that you would say that.」

After parting from Krulcifer for the moment, Alterize who accompanied him until the guest room smiled wryly in relieve.

「But....., Ojou-sama is changed isn't she?」

「Is that right?」

Lux asked in respond to the brief words that Alterize muttered earnestly.

「Yes. Before this, she would formally treat other like stranger, even toward me. She wouldn't get along with me without reservation like this or anything if it's in the past.」

Although her voice sounded a bit exasperated, it also sounded somewhat happy.

It seemed that inside her heart she was happy with the attitude of Krulcifer who was communicating with her friendlily.

Lux once more thought that she was a good person as expected.

「If there is a chance please come playing to Cross Field too without fail. I will welcome Alterize-san there as much as I can.」

「Thank you very much. But, please allow me to restrain at the time being. It feels like Ojou-sama will get angry at me if I have her fiancée to escort me after all.」

Alterize smiled wryly and muttered such thing.

「No, please wait!? I and Krulcifer-san are—」

Lux was panicked and he hesitated whether to say the truth or not. It was then the female butler bowed and left.

In the end he had to do something about the misunderstanding too before they returned home.

While thinking that, Lux changed into his plain clothes and lied down on the bed.

Krulcifer's tie with Mel from the victory she obtained at the military arts tournament, and the gulf between her with the eldest brother Zain and her family that was created from that.

The Pilgrimage Festival that was said would pass near the Ruin, the protection of Pope Nias, and Einfolk house's intention of asking Lux and Krulcifer to raise achievement there.

There was still question remaining inside Lux.

「.....Yosh.」

Lux took a deep breath and put his feeling in order, then he decided a personal strategy that he would keep secret from Krulcifer.

After making a bit of stopover, he asked Alterize to intermediate before he knocked on the door of a private room in the third floor.

Inside the office that was surrounded by bookshelves, the person he wanted to speak with was sitting.

「Excuse me Lord Stiyl. Thank you very much for granting this chance to talk with you today.」

「The night is already late, finish your business briefly. I'm not young like my daughters.」

Stiyl told Lux with brusque tone like usual.

Lux who heard his tone reflexively smiled wryly.

He bought souvenir just now and presented it to the third daughter Yunifa and the fourth daughter Irma but,

『I already received that from other people.』

He recalled how he was curtly refused like that.

Though right after that, he was given 『But, thank you』 with a smile.

「So, what do you want to ask? I should have said everything I need to say to you though?」

「Why did you purposefully called Krulcifer-san back to this country?」

Stiyl frowned slightly hearing Lux's question.

「You feel like criticizing me? In order to raise achievement for Einfeld house, I am making use of that child. But it's just as you see. It's just as you know too, right now I'm putting distance from Krulcifer.」

Stiyl muttered along with a sigh.

But, Lux's opinion differed.

「Perhaps it's true that this country has business with Krulcifer-san, but I feel like that's not all. If you are really rejecting Krulcifer-san, then I think you won't purposefully make her stay at this house here together with me. And the right now, you are allowing me to talk with you like this too—aren't you actually concerned about her?」

「.....」

Lux's question that was said with calm question caused Stiyl to fall silent slightly. Before long he smiled bitterly.

「It seems that you are a man with a considerable power of imagination. Is that all that you want to ask?」

「No, there is one more thing. Will you allow me to ask a foolish question?」

「What is it.....?」

「Why is it that all this time since that meeting, you won't take off that glove even inside the estate?」

「.....It's something that you don't need to know. I'll take my rest now.」

With the talk stopped, Lux bowed and returned to his room.

He didn't find out the answer of what was in his mind, but it couldn't be helped today.

The long day finally ended.

Part 3

Deep at night. At the middle of the holy capital where the people were falling asleep, there was human presence.

The sanctuary that the pope and believers would use for the occasion of audience, ceremony, and legislative assembly.

But at the same time that place couldn't possibly be used as residential area.

It was a consecrated ground that fundamentally even believers couldn't easily enter without pretext.

Thus, for influential person it was a safe place to use for a confidential talk.

「—And, is the calculation to start the action soon finished?」

In the shadow of that chalk white sacred building that was illuminated by faint lighting, there was only a quiet voice that could be heard.

A single shadow emitted that cold tone that was like the air of this night.

A person wearing white robe that seemed like it would fuse with the snowy landscape was directing a dull gaze.

「Don't worry. Our side is also not that stupid to let go of this chance. Everything is flawless—don't you know the nickname of this me as a Drag-Knight?」

There was no one in front of the white robed figure.

That figure's talking partner didn't exist even inside the wide sanctuary ground.

There was a person wearing Drag-Ride on a small hill at the far north a few kl away. (TN: Kl is the unit for kilometer here I think.)

That person was a woman of blooming age, wearing black clothes with its length and sleeves shortened, an outfit style that was like a bandit.

She made a predatory grin and sent only her voice toward the far away sanctuary.

「『The Battlefield's Instrumentalist』, was it? It sounds really strange. As a mercenary, in order to bluff more effectively, isn't there other name that sound a bit more threatening?」

When the figure in white robe said that, the female mercenary who was that person's talking partner scoffed.

She was a legendary mercenary who once rampaged between three countries, including Ymir Theocracy. At present she was a rebel who could be counted as a most dangerous character.

One of Dragon Marauder's three boss—Human Dragon division commander, Drakkhen Megistri.

The victims that suffered from her many layered strategies and ingenious wiles couldn't be counted.

「You will understand sooner or later. More importantly you yourself are the one who need to be careful. Don't do anything stupid like has-been knight..... that Dilwy okay? We the Dragon Marauder has no mercy for traitor.」

The female bandit of blooming age told with calm tone that sounded faintly heartwarming.

The white robed figure smirked fearlessly at that threatening reminder.

「Please rest assured. More importantly, what kind of end Dilwy met? Isn't Baptism from Elixir a technique to awaken a person to their hidden strength?」

That question with calm tone was mixed with faint sharpness.

Drakkhen who heard that smiled wryly while lightly scratching her head.

「I'll let you into the secret for a bit because I trust you. That thing cannot be properly handled see.」

「You are saying, that you weren't tricking me and him?」

「What is called Elixir is a really important secret even inside Ruin, it's something like a powerful drug. If a normal person use it, even if just a bit then

it will be accompanied by intense pain that can even make them lose sanity, in fact using more than half will cause death when we tested it. What's more the amount that can be entered into the body also differ depending on the individuals. And yet if you get reckless and apply it to the whole body all at once, you will get strengthened temporarily, but you won't be able to escape death as the side effect. Your mind will also get encroached and your wicked heart will get amplified.」

‘Fuu’, Drakkhen leaked out a small sigh and muttered.

Hearing that, the other silhouette blew out white exhale to the empty air.

「In other words, he violated direction and used Elixir too much, and died because of that, is that it?」

「No, we didn't tell him anything see.」

‘Hah’, Drakkhen laughed it off and answered immediately.

「I—no, the other guys also checked, but Dragon Marauder didn't even give Dilwy any Elixir. Someone was doing that to that guy of their own accord.」

「Rather than spewing out an absurd lie, honestly recognizing your own failure will get you more trust you know?」

「It can't be helped if you doubt us like that. I can only tell you to believe us. Elixir itself is considerably rare though, the way to obtain it shouldn't even be known. Well, regarding that matter it was really unexpected.」

「.....Fine then. It's dangerous to have idle talk with you longer than this.」

「If you make me remember a voice of your acquaintance, I'll be able to imitate it. If you have a clue about nuisance that feel like they will suspect the plan, setting them up as traitor is also one way you know?」

「No need for worry. More importantly—」

「Yeah, if your business goes well, then as promised I'll give you a valuable information. Rather than that, is the rumor true? About the existence of Angel that this country and Einfeld house is hiding.」

「That information will depend on your result, Drakkhen. Though I was surprised that even the Seven Dragon Paladins of the new kingdom is coming

along too in the Pilgrimage Festival this time.」

「It's okay for me to demand extra amount of reward isn't it? It feels like this is going to turn into a troublesome work you know.」

「I'll think about it if it goes well. —Well then」

The white robed figure answered curtly toward Drakkhen's frivolous talk.

The robed figure disappeared inside the sanctuary as though to say that the talk was over with that.

「A believer doing evil deed..... It will be great if you don't get stabbed in the back, by the god you guys believed in.」

The female boss that similarly stopped sending her voice to far away talked to herself in irony.

「Two of the Seven Dragon Paladins.....the Subjugator and the Black Hero huh. Let's see what you've got, so called strongest.」

The color of snow that was starting to fall enveloped the whole holy capital.

Episode 3 – God And Angel

Part 1

—The next day.

The second day of Pilgrimage Festival was as expected, they woke up early and took breakfast, then they headed to the gathering place using horse carriage.

This time they would do the same ceremony at a cemetery existing in the west side of the holy capital.

「The schedule today is also to go to two places. After finishing the ceremony in this cemetery where high ranked believers are sleeping, we are scheduled to head to a monastery near the sanctuary.」

「But, is there something in the places today? Somehow, it feel like the atmosphere is different from yesterday.」

Krulcifer nodded at the blunt question of Lux.

Different from today, the Sanctuary Knight Order members showed expression that was strongly tense.

「It's because the distance is relatively near to the Ruin HallTunnel. There is no guarantee that Abyss won't appear anytime. Of course the surrounding of the Ruin is being monitored, but the Hall here is a bit special.」

According to her, just like the name implied, it was a Ruin with shape like a coal mine that already had everything in it dug to exhaustion.

Although the entrance at the outskirts of the holy capital was naturally

monitored, sometimes Abyss would still appear from place other than there, and recently the frequency of that was increasing exceptionally.

「Is, that so.」

Having been told that, Lux focused his mind.

Somehow recently, because he was fighting against a lot of Abyss he tended to lose focus, but letting his guard down was taboo.

After that, they boarded the horse carriage the Sanctuary Knight Order prepared, and an hour later.

The moment they arrived at the foot of the cemetery hill that was the pilgrimage location, Mel leaped at Lux.

「Yahhoo. Onii-chan. You also came today! Mel is really happy you knooow!」

「What's the matter, Mel?」

Regardless of how her pretending to be a child had been exposed, she still acted mischievously like this. Lux smiled wryly at that.

But, when he was unable to shake her off in the end, Krulcifer who was beside him spoke out.

「Mel. You are a member of the Sanctuary Knight Order right? I think it's better if you act a little quieter.」

「Noooot reallyyy. I'm genius after all, and I'm also a kid. It's fine for me to be somewhat selfish. Even Onii-chan, he is happy that a cute girl is sticking close to him.」

But, Mel grinned like a little devil and provoked even further.

「That's unfortunate. Lux-kun is a boy who is already used of getting surrounded by cute girls daily you know? Even like that he cannot lay his hand on them even for a little bit, that's why it's pointless for you even if you go that far.」

「.....Wait, even me got spoken ill of casually!?!」

Lux immediately retorted like that, but unfortunately he was ignored.

「Hmmmph. But, I'm cuter, that's why Onii-chan is happy aren't you?」

Krulcifer sighed seeing Mel kept pressing aggressively even now, but she was casually sending glances at Lux with a gaze that seemed as though she wanted to say something.

(So, somehow, she is looking like she really wants to complain to me.....!)

In a glance, Krulcifer was taking an attitude of the senior who was unperturbed by Mel's provocation, but that kind of atmosphere could be sensed from some points in her attitude.

‘Yosh’, Lux resolved himself.

He would object in Krulcifer's place so that her mood wouldn't be harmed here.

「I can hardly say that you know? Krulcifer-san is also pretty, but that's not all there is to her, because I think including her behavior and also her atmosphere, she is a really lovely person.」

Was it her refinement as a duke's daughter, or else was it something special that came from herself?

It was again different from Lisha and others. Her aura that maintained her own style and pride was really beautiful in his opinion.

Perhaps Krulcifer was pleased with his words, her lips loosened just slightly.

「Lux-kun too has become skilled with flattery aren't you?」

Lux let out a relieved sigh at her reaction, while Mel puffed up her cheeks looking displeased.

「Heee. So Onii-chan's preference is adult person. But even me, after a few years passed I will be the same age like Krulcifer you know? At that time the younger me will be better than her don't you think? My breasts too will of course become bigger in the future!」

「Eh.....!?」

The words from Mel who was hugging Lux's arm shaken up Lux and his cheeks blushed.

His upper arm felt soft sensation from the chest of the girl that was mostly

flat right now and his heart skipped a beat.

(—Wait, just what am I thinking!? Mel is still thirteen you know!?)

While he was trying to hide his agitation like that, Krulcifer beside him quietly muttered.

「It's better to not put on air with something that you have no guarantee of, you know? After all it might make you feel embarrassed later on.」

「Aas expected from Krulcifer. The saying from a person with currently embarrassing breast size really has different weight behind it.」

Mel responded with derisive smile toward Krulcifer's composed respond.

Krulcifer's icy expression *snap* looked like there was a faint crack entering it.

「Ah, are you bothered? I'm sorry. I have to apologize if I had said something bad.」

「I'll say this ahead but, it's not like I'm bothered with breast size or anything.」

「Hmmp. I think that most man doesn't feel like that though. Before this I heard it from the people of Sanctuary Knight Order though, they said that bigger breast is better. Onii-chan, which one is your preference?」

「E, eerrr.....」



Lux was troubled that the talk was suddenly directed to him.

There was no way he could make immediate decision of which was better, so he couldn't say anything, but for the time being he tried responding.

「Eerr, the size is not something I'm concerned about.....I think.」

For a moment he felt Krulcifer's gaze glancing briefly at him from afar, but perhaps that was just his imagination.

「Hmmm. Well, fine I guess. I'll leave it at that.」

Mel grinned wickedly and leaned her body further toward Lux.

「Even so you, you are a man with a strong sense of duty more than I thought aren't you? It looks like despite your appearance, your core is relatively firm.」

「Ahaha, thank you.」

It didn't feel bad to be praised by this girl who was terrifyingly intelligent and prodigal relatively to her age.

There was no doubt that she had strongly pushy personality, but she didn't seem like a bad child. It was when Lux was thinking that—,

「Then, won't you cancel your betrothal with Krulcifer and try to marry me?」

「—Eh?」

Lux couldn't immediately understand what he was told. His mouth was gaping wide.

But, Mel kept staring at Lux with upturned gaze and continued with a bewitching smile.

「Although the manliness of your looks is moderate, but it's still a nice face. And your strength as Drag-Knight is also considerable, and your humbleness too, I'm quite pleased with it.」

「Do, don't make fun of me!? That, even if it's me, I won't keep getting tricked that many times.」

「I am serious you know? Besides—you've gone through the trouble to participate in the Pilgrimage Festival like this, so it also save some effort already.」

「.....? What does that mean?」

Lux tilted his head in puzzlement. Mel told him the answer straightforwardly.

「There is a condition so a pious believer of Ymir Theocracy can marry with a person of other country. That marriage partner has to participate in one of the great festival that is hold in this country. In family like noble with old pedigree, it's still something that they will carry out for sure.」

Ymir Theocracy that possessed unique faith.

He had heard before that believer with high rank even in such country would be imposed with particular obligation.

(Eh, but..... That means—)

「To dare to seduce him when I'm right here, you really don't value your own life aren't you?」

The moment he thought something like that, Krulcifer cut in along with a sigh.

「Although you are a child, but making a ruckus in the middle of ceremony will become a disgrace for the distinguished Gizalut house you know?」

When Krulcifer rebuked with a tone that was like a big sister once more, Mel responded with a smile that contained no guilt at all.

「There is no such thing. Then, see you again, Onii-chan!」

Perhaps Mel decided that she had made enough provocation already, because she let go of Lux's arm.

She waved her hand with a smile, then without pause she rushed toward the ranks of troops that would head to the cemetery.

When there were only the two of them left there, Krulcifer glared at Lux with reproachful eyes.

「It looked like you were really enjoying yourself aren't you? I wonder, is Lux-kun's preference a little girl?」

「Wai-!? Please don't say strange thing, Krulcifer-san! Certainly she was a peculiar child, but it doesn't look like she is particularly malicious.....」

「I wonder about that. In the end Lux-kun seems to be particularly kind to cute

girl after all.」

Krulcifer kept her gaze to the front while talking with a tone that was vaguely cold.

It could also be seen that she was slightly sulking for a girl who was always composed.

「Mo, more importantly. About this Pilgrimage Festival.....」

And so Lux tried to change the topic. He spoke out about the question that arose from what he heard from Mel just now.

「What is it?」

「By participating in this event, I can be recognized as Krulcifer-san's marriage partner even by the country, is that true?」

「.....」

「Wai-, why are you falling silent!? That's not like you, Krulcifer-san!?!」

When Lux said that in panic, Krulcifer made a serious face and slowly averted her face away from Lux.

「That was really careless of me wasn't it? Now that you mention it, there is actually that kind of custom. Certainly when this Pilgrimage Festival is over, Lux-kun will unexpectedly obtain that qualification.」

「Somehow that's really transparent you know!? Krulcifer-san!」

「Don't be surprised like that. Remember that I simply called Lux-kun to come home with me is simply because I was concerned with the true intention of Einfeld house, it's not like I'm trying to arrange all the engagement requirements while Lux-kun is unaware, I have no such aim at all.」

「At least say that while looking at my eyes!?!」

Lux unconsciously retorted with loud voice at Krulcifer's matter-of-fact talk.

The surrounding knights glared his way fiercely. Lux blocked his mouth when he noticed, right after that,

「—All hands, draw your sword!」

A male voice cut through the white mist. The voice came from the front of the ranks.

Lux and Krulcifer instantly changed their expression and pulled out their Sword Device from their sword belt.

「There is reaction of one Abyss from the front of the cemetery! Five members of Sanctuary Knight Order will head there to intercept it. The remaining members will wear their Drag-Ride and devote themselves to the protection of his eminence the pope!」

The knight captain raised a loud voice and sent instruction to the troops.

Naturally, one person among the troops would constantly wear Drake all the time to detect enemy using the Drake's basic function, the Radar.

「Fuh, at any rate if the Abyss is only discovered, that means it's still far away. Is there any need to be that panicked?」

The eldest brother, Zain who was walking nearby without them noticing muttered that.

But, Krulcifer calmly shook her head and denied his words.

「If it's necessity, there is one. A narrow hill path is continuing from this path until the exit to the cemetery. It will be dangerous if we don't obtain the advantage in terrain, that's why they made the first move before the enemy notice.」

「Nu.....」

Zain who had that pointed out fell silent bitterly.

「Certainly..... If it's this place, it will be too dangerous to fight.」

Lux also agreed with Krulcifer's opinion.

Naturally, in this kind of single narrow path, they wouldn't be able to spread out their force, it would be hard to fight even if they summoned Drag-Ride.

If there was an Abyss at the square of the cemetery, it would be dangerous if they didn't intercept it before it could arrive at this narrow path.

「Rather what concern me is—no, perhaps I'm only thinking too much.」

「.....What do you mean?」

Zain showed a dubious expression at Krulcifer's muttering, it was then—,

—

iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii-!

—

「.....-!?」

The intense strange noise was reverberating in the nearby area of the cemetery.

It was the tone of the outbreak of battle that they had got used to hearing many times.

The sound of the horn flute that called Abyss and made them obey.

Right after that a tension ran through the surrounding, the trees at left and right began to shake, and several Abysses leaped out.

「—!? These guys, they are.....!」

Creature type Abyss that was called Haiit.

It was a huge monkey with height several times of human and it was densely covered in thick hair.

It would cut apart its prey with three claws that were sharp like long sword, and it possessed physical strength that could smash even castle wall in one strike.

Even when one was clad in Drag-Ride, they were a formidable enemy that might brought down their enemy by brute force if they let their guard down.

Furthermore, it was relatively agile despite their hugeness, it would be quite a disadvantage if they faced this Abyss in a terrain without good visibility.

「It, it's pincer attack-!? They are coming simultaneously from left and right-.....!」

The Sanctuary Knight Order members yelled with voice that was a mix of terror and surprise.

Two Drag-Knights who weren't even perturbed by the approaching threat muttered the Passcode almost at the same time.

「—Come, the winged dragon of crest, the symbol of strength. Obey my sword and soar, Wyvern.」

「—Reincarnate. The huge dragon of calamity, taken captive by riches. Become the compensation of desire far and wide, Fafnir.」

Right after that, phosphorescence gathered in front of Lux and Krulcifer and formed shape.

The aerodynamically shaped Drag-Rides that appeared quickly covered their body and transformed into armor.

「.....USHAAAAAaAAH.....!」

The Abysses were howling while mowing down *BEKI BEKI-!* trees in their approach.

It seemed there were multiple Haiit that came in pincer attack, the scream of the other Sanctuary Knight Order members could be heard.

But,

「Krulcifer-san!」

「Yes, I'll leave the vanguard role to you.」

Shockwave from Howling Howl and the swing of Scale Blade as shield replacement deflected away the many trees thrown their way and smashed them apart.

Right after that, a huge monkeyHaiit that leaped out from the trees. Without delay Krulcifer sniped it.

Fafnir's special armament, Freezing Cannon fired out freezing bullet.

The blue flash that was fired avoided the countless obstacles that were scattered to everywhere and froze the face of the Haiit.

If it was a normal beast, the victory would be decided the moment its head was frozen along with its respiratory tract.

—But, the Abyss before them came attacking by swinging its powerful arm

that was like a log even in that state.

「What-!?!」

Zain who was looking from nearby shuddered in terror seeing that unexpected counterattack.

But, the complexion of Lux who was confronting it didn't change in the slightest. He instantly cut off the arm that was swung at him.

It was a super high speed slash from Quick Draw, a technique to accelerate just one action to the extreme.

The Abyss was resisting even now, but Krulcifer's Freezing Cannon fired several normal bullets on its chest.

The concentrated attack to the same spot destroyed the core at its chest.

「.....Gi, aA.....!」

The Haiit writhed as though trying to tear off its chest with its remaining hand, before it finally ceased to live.

It fell prostrate on the spot with a thunderous sound before it crumbled into black ash.

「Defeating a Haiit that easily, in this situation.....?」

The eldest brother Zain who was watching Krulcifer and Lux muttered in daze.

The two's great coordination captivated him, but the excellence of their skill was even more so.

The Drag-Knights of Sanctuary Knight Order at the surrounding also recovered their calm and began to start an even match despite some amount of disadvantage.

「H, hmph..... It looks like the seat of Seven Dragon Paladins aren't just a mere title.」

Zain pretended to be tough while being overwhelmed by the strength of the two, but the fighting was still continuing.

「Countermeasure against Haiit was also described in the Academy's textbook isn't it.」

Krulcifer muttered and looked up to the sky for confirmation.

「—That's right. Let's go by the book here.」

The huge monkey Abyss couldn't fly in exchange of their maneuverability.

Therefore, it was a good plan for those who was wearing flying type Drag-Ride to not crowd up in a cramped place and scattered instead.

「Zain-niisan, join up with the force at the front. I will give backup from the sky.」

Krulcifer told her big brother like that and she quickly drove Fafnir flying.

She took position in the sky where she was able to get bird's eye view of the cemetery and the hill path until there. She then readied her Rifle to give backup, it was then—,

「Krulcifer-san! Watch out-!」

Right after Lux yelled, light bullet smashed on Fafnir's back and explosion occurred.

When the flame blasts that burst consecutively settled down, there was Krulcifer lingering in the air along with seven shields.

「.....What could that be? This is—」

She was unharmed due to Auto Shield, the special armament of automatic protection, but she was frowning at that attack that seemed as though it was plotted.

At the altitude of one step higher than Fafnir that was flying midair to aim at the Haiit—the Abyss called Gargoyle was lurking inside the cloud.

「They planned this? No, such thing is—.....!」

Lux also flew his Wyvern and ran his gaze to the surrounding alertly.

Something was strange.

Excluding some minor exception, the thing called Abyss wouldn't coordinate with fellow Abyss of different type.

Especially when someone was using horn flute to manipulate several type of

Abyss simultaneously, their movement should become simple because they were obeying the same command.

And yet, what was with this splendid coordination?

The one Haiit that appeared first at the beginning caused the force's Drake to concentrate their attention to the front.

At the opening when the attention of the enemy searching was shifted, a pincer attack came from Haiit that were lurking among the trees at left and right.

No matter how the Sanctuary Knight Order tried to prepare their battle force beforehand, they wouldn't be able to avoid wracking their brain thinking of how to deal with this terrain.

If Drag-Knights wearing flying type Drag-Ride escaped to the sky then took position to give covering fire toward the ground, at that moment the Gargoyle above would hit them with light bullet as though it had been waiting for it.

It was a coordination that was as though the situation at their side, the best action the Drag-Knights would take had been completely seen through.

If it was someone else other than Fafnir that possessed Auto Shield, they would be struck down, or at the worst case they would lose their life on the spot.

At the present, the number of the Abyss that could be confirmed by sight was seven in total.

The user of the horn flute couldn't be found at the surrounding, so for the time being that was all of their enemy.

If it was with the force this time that was mostly formed by High Class Drag-Knights, they should be able to fight in superior position, but the ingenious planning of the enemy forced their side to disadvantage right now.

「Lux-kun. Can I leave the below to you? I will chase after the Abyss in the sky.」

First nothing could begin if they didn't grasp the enemy's battle strength.

The Sanctuary Knight Order members were becoming agitated against the

change in situation that was occurring in succession, their formation was almost crumbling.

Here they could only open a path of survival somehow using the strength of Lux and Krulcifer.

「This isn't the time to save strength.」

Lux made that decision and quickly put his hand on Bahamut's Sword Device.

But, at that instant. Thought of terrific killing intent pierced the surrounding air.

「—Don't move. They are my prey.」

「.....-!?!」

Lux saw instantly.

The young girl who was messing around with him until just now —Mel Gizalut was wearing a large type Drag-Ride that was unbalanced with her body.

The upper body was red, the lower body was white.

Right after his gaze was stolen by the armor with unfamiliar coloring, that Divine Drag-Ride started moving.

「.....I'll show you, the meaning of the nickname Subjugator.」

Mel lifted a large type HalberdDragon Battle Halberd, then she accelerated using wheel Drivepropulsion device.

She leaped out in front of the Sanctuary Knight Order members who were in one-sided defensive battle and struck a Haiit with her Halberd.

「Gi, GOBUAaAH!?!」

Haiit that had tough body including hard fur that was like wire was blown away with just an attack.

Furthermore perhaps from the ability of a special armament, its whole body was enveloped with flame instantly.

But, even Lux knew from the battle just now that it wasn't an opponent that would be finished just from that.

「Mel! Just that much is no good! If you don't destroy the enemy's core—」

「My, that's troublesome isn't it.」

Right after that, the Haiit leaped toward Ddraig Gwiber even with its whole body getting scorched.

But, Mel used the tip of her Halberd—the spear part and unleashed a thrust, piercing the core at its chest without difficulty.

「O, GU.....u!」

It left behind short groan and its huge body that was around three ml crumbled. (TN: Made a mistake with this meter unit, previously I used 'mel', but the correct one is 'ml'. It's the unit for meter in this world)

After confirming that, Mel quickly drove her Divine Drag-Ride and hunted the other Haiit.

「.....」

The brilliance of her skill stole the words from Lux.

She attacked with flame in order to burn off the Haiit's hard fur, and right after that she pulverized the core with a thrust of her Halberd.

It was an extremely effective tactic that was carried out by seeing through the Abyss's trait.

While Lux was admiring that extraordinary skill, a Dragon Voice from Krulcifer came to him.

『I finished off the Gargoyle in the sky. There is only one left now.』

『—Right』

This wasn't the time to be entranced by Mel's movement.

Mel's Divine Drag-Ride had Drive in wheel shape meant that her Drag-Ride was land battle type.

The moment Lux flew toward the sky in order to give Krulcifer's backup, he saw a Haiit that might be the last assaulted a defenseless nun.

「Watch out-!」

Lux made his Wyvern flew in full speed and intercepted the Haiit.

He blocked using Scale Blade the tip of the fist that the Haiit raised as counterattack.

Right after that, that huge fist was smashed up into pieces.

The counter technique that received the opponent's attack and returned it into one point, Critical Hit.

「Uu.....GIAAaAaAH!」

The Haiit shrieked while plucking off a nearby large tree. It came striking by using that as replacement for weapon.

It must be its countermeasure because he considered Lux's technique as danger, but its movement was perfectly predicted.

「—Wise Blood.」

Krulcifer who was midair didn't overlook it and sniped.

The Divine Raiment of Fafnir that carried out future prediction of a few seconds ahead completely estimated the movement of the Haiit. Several streak of flash froze the Abyss's limbs.

At the end consecutive shots concentrated on the chest gouged the core and the Abyss crumbled from that.

「Fuu.....」

They somehow escaped from the predicament. Lux let out a relieved sigh.

The Sanctuary Knight Order members too were an elite lineup as expected, it didn't seem like the group, including the pope Nias had any serious harm.

「Haaa, I'm saved dearimasu.」 (TN: Kinda like 'desu')

But, Lux felt something out of place from the existence of the sisternun who was nestling close to the side of the similarly relieved Pope Nias who was still a young boy.

A girl who looked like she was the same age with Nias and Mel.

Her presence here itself wasn't unnatural, and she might be with them too in

the pilgrimage yesterday.

But if she was here in the role as helper of the ceremony, wasn't a single bishop sufficient for that?

The meaning of intentionally making a powerless girl accompanying this kind of pilgrimage that was accompanied with danger was—.

「.....-!? Everyone be on your guard! There is still one reaction of Abyss remaining!」

One of the Sanctuary Knight Order who was wearing Drake yelled.

When tension ran in the area once more, a winged beast—Chimera that was hiding behind fallen snow assaulted toward the position of Pope Nias.

「Protect his eminence!」

As expected the people there weren't that careless.

Several Drag-Knights stood in front of Nias and the bishop, but the Chimera suddenly changed direction, bit the clothes of the petite sister, and left while carrying her to the sky.

「.....Wha-!?」

It changed objective in a situation where everyone was worrying about the pope's safety.

Not to mention the whole Sanctuary Knight Order, even Lux and Krulcifer were also taken by surprise.

When Lux poured strength into the control stick of his Drag-Ride to chase after the Abyss, something flew up from the ground.

「Ddraig Gwiber—Wyvern ModeFlight Form」

Mel grasped her Sword Device and muttered. The mind control operation that was done almost simultaneously with that transformed the shape of the Divine Drag-Ride she was wearing.

From the land battle type that specialized in ground battle, close quarter combat, and defensive power, into flying type that possessed back wings with high mobility.

The Drag-Ride that was colored with two colors of white and red had the proportion of that coloring reversed.

「Transformation!? Don't tell me, that Divine Drag-Ride is able to use both trait of flying and land battle?」

Even while Lux was shocked like that, there was no way he could leave everything to Mel alone.

Lux and Krulcifer also flew their respective Drag-Ride to chase after the base, it was at that timing a squall suddenly flowed in front of the Chimera, stopping its movement for a moment.

Right after that, the Halberd of the flying Mel struck its torso from behind into two.

「—Gl, iiii!」

The Chimera left behind the reverberation of dull scream of death agony before its body crumbled.

Mel watched it from start to end in satisfaction while smiling bewitchingly.

「—How disappointing, it looks like there is no more enemy left. But well, it means that the achievement today is my victory.」

Lux was speechless against her atmosphere that was vaguely tinged with shadow.

(The squall just now, was that Ddraig Gwiber's Divine Raiment?)

In any case, what he understood was that the fact that this girl called Mel Gizalut was really a genius Drag-Knight wasn't an exaggeration.

「—Wait, rather than that, someone please save meeeeeee-!」

「.....-! Krulcifer-san! Will you make it!?」

「Yes, it's all right.」

The sister who was liberated due to the death of the Chimera and was starting to free fall was quickly caught by Fafnir that possessed unrivalled mobility.

Like that they landed at the outskirts of the cemetery, slight distance away

from the pope and the group of Sanctuary Knight Order.

Mel watched that before returning, while Lux chased behind Krulcifer.

「Krulcifer-san! Is that girl all right!?!」

When Lux caught up beside Krulcifer, she was making a dumbfounded face while looking down on the girl in sister clothes who was simply lying down on the new snow.

「Nn, uuu..... I thought it was the end for me dearimasu.」

The girl slowly opened her eyes above the snow and twisted her body painfully.

The hood covering her head slipped down, exposing a beautiful hair and face.

She was a young girl possessing light green hair.

There was no sign of worrying wound anywhere on her body, just—on her head, drooping ears like puppy were attached there.

「Lux-kun, this.....」

「This ears, this child, don't tell me.....!」

The body stature of the petite girl, and her appearance with animal ears growing on her head.

The Gear Leadermanager that was called as Automaton, which they had happened to see several times in various Ruins.

They reflexively held their breath seeing her features that had the vestiges of Gear Leader.

「Eh.....? AAAAH!?!」

Perhaps the girl noticed the gaze of Lux and Krulcifer, she sprang up on the spot, then her hands reached out to left and right in panic.

It seemed she was searching for her falling veil on the snow, but before long she gave up and hid her ears with both her hands.

「You, those ears are—」

「Wo, woof woof-!」

She said with upturned gaze while her hands kept hiding her ears.

Strange silence drifted in the area.

「Fu, fufufu....., if I attach accessory and character like this to myself, I might be able to deceive them somehow dearimasu. O, Onee-san and Onii-san, thank you very much for saving Ney woof. I'm immensely grateful dearimasu! Woof!」

「.....」

The looks that Krulcifer was looking at the girl with was gradually changing into a complex look.

A personality that resembled La Cruche who they found at the Arc some time ago.

No, somehow she even felt that this one here was even stranger.

Lux and Krulcifer guessed that for the time being there was no danger, so they dispelled their armor and discussed with each other.

「I wonder, if all Automatons basically have regrettable personality?」

「I don't know about that.....」

Lux smiled wryly at Krulcifer's muttering. Seeing that, the girl who introduced herself as Ney waved her hands in great panic.

「Yo, you're wrong dearimasu! I am not this thing called Automata that you are saying!Fuu, I almost got found out just now dearimasu.」

「I don't care about it but your inside voice is leaking out completely you know..... And, what are you—」

Krulcifer was completely exasperated, but Ney didn't even realize that and she averted her face.

「Fufufu, they are completely tricked dearimasu. Perhaps in contrast to their appearance, they are actually dim witted child dearimasu.」

「That's why we can hear you loud and clear. I have the conceit that I am a gentle person but—I'll dismantle you, you know?」

「Hawa—!? I'm sorry dearimasu-!」

「I'm joking. More importantly, you don't have recollection of my face?」

「Eh—?」

Krulcifer calmly told her and lightly patted the girl's head.

Instantly, Ney went 'hah' in realization and her eyes opened wide, bluish white light dwelled in her eyes.

「—You are XferKey's Supervisor, sama?」

After blinking her eyes a few times, the girl removed her hands from her head.

The drooping ears went *piko*- and stood up straight, then she suddenly jumped on the chest of Krulcifer who was still in pilot suit appearance.

「Kyah.....」

Krulcifer unusually raised a delicate cry. Ney hugged such Krulcifer with her face moved to tears.

「I finally can meet you Xfer-sama! With this I too can return to the Ruin dearimasu. I'm glad desuuu」

「Calm down a bit, are you really, an Automaton of the Ruin?」

「Yes. I am the Gear Leader of the Ruin Hall, Ney Louches dearimasu. Ah, err..... On that subject, this person here is—」

Saying that, she became concerned of Lux's presence after this late and she directed her gaze toward him coweringly.

It was a concern whether she would regard Lux as enemy just like La Cruche when her memory returned, but at the present time it didn't seem like it.

「Then, this mean you will listen to what I'm saying right? Ney, can I ask you to keep silent about the fact that I am an Xfer, and that your true identity became known by us?」

「.....Eh?」

Lux and Ney tilted their head simultaneously hearing Krulcifer's words.

On top of that, it seemed Krulcifer was telling even more various things to

Ney with small voice.

「I'm relying on you. Let's talk about the minute detail again later on. Then—」

But, Lux immediately understood what she meant.

The force of Sanctuary Knight Order that was protecting Pope Nias was searching the area around the cemetery.

Most likely they were looking for this girl who was disguising herself as a sister.

「Are you two okay!? Where is that sister!?!」

The voice of the knight order's captain came to hearing, so Lux guessed Krulcifer's intention.

「Everyone is safe. The girl is also not injured.」

Lux answered like that while showing Ney who had put on her veil once more.

The captain sighed with relieved expression. Then he said his thanks and led away the girl.

「It looks like there is a need to ask that child about her story later.」

「Yes.....」

It seemed that due to the great effort of the Sanctuary Knight Order that was centered on Mel, they managed to purge the swarm of Abyss.

After that the pilgrimage ceremony ended without a hitch, and with that the schedule today was accomplished.

「—Then, tomorrow we will be in the care of everyone in the knight order once more.」

The grateful speech from the bishop Orphel concluded the second day and the group broke up in front of the sanctuary.

Lux's gaze chased after the figure of Ney who was nonchalantly accompanying Pope Nias, but she entered inside the sanctuary without stopping.

The sanctuary was thoroughly a place for practical business, there shouldn't be any place for living there.

(Is Ney under the management of this country's top brass?)

At the very least, there was no doubt that the high ranked priest around the archbishop or bishop knew about Ney's true identity.

While Lux was thinking of such thing, his back was suddenly tapped.

「Where are you looking at, Onii-chan?」

「Uwah!?!」

The sensation of his back suddenly getting tickled caused Lux's body to jump on the spot with a twitch.

When he turned around, Mel Gizalut was standing there with a bewitching smile.

「Do, do you have business with me?」

Lux was scared whether she had seen through Ney's existence, but fortunately it didn't seem so.

「What do you think? About my fighting style with Ddraig Gwiber? It was even more magnificent than Krulcifer right?」

Mel smiled with a proud tone.

Regarding Lux's true identity as Black Hero who was driving the Divine Drag-Ride Bahamut, it seemed she noticed it when he fought Greifer at the arena in the royal capital, but she didn't show any sign of making allusion to it.

In the first place, normally someone wouldn't poke their nose into the affair of their allied country.

In short, she was simply asking Lux because she knew that he was a strong person at the same level with her.

「It was really amazing. I have never seen before someone that can handle Divine Drag-Ride until that far in your age.」

「I wish for lovelier compliment here. Something like my age, or being genius, I'm tired of hearing that kind of ordinary words. Ah, I already know that I'm beautiful and lovely, so you don't need to praise me about that.」

「As I thought, Mel is a really interesting kid.」

Her attitude was full of confidence, but mysteriously it didn't sound like sarcasm.

Perhaps it was because of the girl's innocent atmosphere.

「However, I think that the way you fight is dangerous.」

「Hee, I wonder if you can give me an opinion that I can use as reference.」

Mel asked back unperturbedly toward Lux's words.

She was still very young, but it seemed she wasn't soft mentally.

That was why Lux too didn't force himself to be considerate and he spoke his frank opinion.

「Certainly you are strong. Perhaps, you have been memorizing the mode of life of various types of Abyss, and you are also able to master that peculiar Divine Drag-Ride. If it's only in aspect of strength, then certainly I think among the force just now you might be stronger than anyone.....but」

「You aren't putting the safety of everyone as first priority—is that what you want to say I wonder?」

Mel made a cynical smile and preempted Lux's words.

It was hard to realize because her situational judgment was accurate and her strength was also overwhelming, but Mel was trying to hunt the Abyss inside her range in the shortest and fastest way.

That act itself was correct as one possible strategy, but at the same time it would make any leeway to be lost.

And then, she wasn't taking into account of cooperating with other Drag-Knight.

It must be an action that came from possessing outstanding combat strength and absolute confidence, but it was risky.

「—I see. Well, that can't be helped.」

But, Mel more or less nodded toward what Lux pointed out and she said that without hesitation.

「Because, my heart is something cursed.」

「.....Eh?」

Lux tilted his head at her suggestive mutter.

「I am the Subjugator—it's the title given to a person who destroyed Abyss more than anyone in this country. The reason I obtained that tilte, is because when I see Abyss, my nature is that I cannot help but to defeat it before anything else.」

「That's, what do you—?」

「You didn't hear from Krulcifer? My house—Gizalut house that is a great noble of this country was destroyed seven years ago. My family died from Abyss's attack, leaving only me alone.」

「.....」

Lux was shocked by that tragic fact, but at the same time he also felt like something clicked into place.

Although her house was a military family that was equal to Einfeld house, but why was it only her existence that was famous?

It was because the lineage of her house had already died except herself.

「The day of Pilgrimage Festival just like today seven years ago. The Ruin rampaged—and ten-odd Abysses overflowed out all at once. It was difficult for the Drag-Knights of this country that was inexperienced at that time to even deal with it.」

Mel's face that was always filled with smile of unyielding spirit was tinged with slight grief.

「That's why, since then I'm broken. Even if I have to risk some amount of danger, when I see Abyss I can't help but feel that I have to defeat them. Even myself cannot stop it, this impulse of mine.」

「Mel.....」

「This talk is over. Let's meet again, Onii-chan.」

Mel's tone returned to usual and she left.

Lux couldn't say anything more. He saw off her back.

Part 2

「Thank you for your hard work today. Well then, let's head to the number one inn in the holy capital.」

After getting discharged from the guard duty near the sanctuary, Alterize came along with horse carriage as expected, but today she was showing them a different destination.

「Eerr, we aren't going back home?」

「Because there is plan to participate in a dinner party that is being hold during the Pilgrimage Festival.」

「If you are tired, it's also fine to return to the mansion of Einfeld, but I think that staying outside at least for today will instead make it feel more easeful you know?」

Urged like that by Krulcifer, Lux decided to participate in the party too.

Fundamentally it was a celebration of Ymir Theocracy that would be held solemnly in one's own residence or at the church, but a part of the nobles would prepare a gorgeous dinner party.

Believers with position like the pope or bishop wouldn't participate in this banquet.

It seemed that it wasn't something formal that was conforming to the doctrine, but something that a part of the nobles held independently.

Having said that, compared to the dinner party of other country, there was no doubt that it was something quiet.

After the horse carriage ran for a while, they arrived at a high class inn that was attached with bath, bar, and cafeteria.

「Ojou-sama has a bit of business, so please relax over here first.」

Guided by Alterize, Lux opened the door of an individual room.

The room was clean, with calming interior design and color scheme.

It wasn't as luxurious as the royal capital's high class inn, but it had chic design and consolidated ornaments, bringing out a mysterious calm.

It seemed that it also had services that were unique to northern country, like putting warmed rock at the bed and so on.

The interior of the inn itself was something that even Lux was happy about, but, 「Err, Alterize-san. This room, for some reason it has two beds in it though.....」

After giving the room a brief survey, Lux alluded regarding that.

「Yes. There is also a room with one large type bed but, that's, it's still, the Pilgrimage Festival is also not over yet. If the two of you cut loose too much—」

Alterize averted her gaze for some reason and her cheeks reddened. Seeing that, Lux was convinced.

「That's not it, don't tell me Krulcifer-san will be in this same room!？」

「.....Honestly speaking, from my view I also think that this is still too early, but this is so, Lux-sama too, won't become too daring, in the academy or in Einfoolk house, that's why.」

「Please don't be considerate like that-! Or rather, between I and Krulcifer-san something like betrothal is still no—」

「Then, when you finished changing, please head to the dinner party at the second floor. I think Ojou-sama will also change in this room, so please hurry as much as possible.」

The door was closed shut with a click along with a bow.

He missed the chance to resolve the misunderstanding again.

「—But, I wonder, what does Krulcifer-san think about the matter of betrothal?」

Lux was changing into the prepared dress suit while he suddenly thought of such thing.

For Krulcifer, at present Einfolk house was pushing troublesome betrothal on her, so she made Lux to assume the role of fiancée to avoid the troublesome matter. Surely that was it.

But, as expected, he got the hunch that it would become problem at the future if this misunderstanding was left as it was indefinitely.

「I have to do something about it.」

The moment he relaxed his attention like that, an impulse of wanting to lie down on the bed welled up.

「Fuu, I'm tired.....」

Lux sat down on the bed. He then stretched up his body before collapsing down.

Then, in the place of soft feather blanket, *munyun* such soft sensation touched his head.

「Eh—?」

The moment Lux tilted his head in confusion, Lux's body was quickly embraced by a girl's hands gently and he was restrained.

Lux was speechless from a great shock. Then a familiar voice of a girl entered his ear.

「Lu-chan, caught you.」

「.....Wait, Phi-chan!? Wa-, why!? How!?!」

The one sleeping on Lux's bed was his childhood friend, Philuffy.

The back of Lux's head was placed on the chest of the girl who was incidentally lying down face up there. His posture was as though it became replacement of pillow for him.

On top of that, Philuffy circled both her hands around Lux and embraced him *gyuuu-* tightly that he couldn't move.

「The door was left open, so I entered you know?」

「A, it's true. If I'm not careful—not that, what I want to ask isn't that you know!?!」

Lux's face turned red from feeling the soft and elastic texture of Philuffy's breast while he yelled.

「Onee-chan, and my master will do something somehow about it for me a bit. So I can finally come here.」

Philuffy gave him such answer with an indifferent tone.

Lux didn't understand the detail with only that, but it seemed that the gist of it was that Philuffy came to Ymir using Relie's strength.

「Master?Or rather, this posture is bad, so let me go for now okay!?」(TN: Master in the meaning of mentor, teacher) 「....., don't want.」

Philuffy kept hugging Lux with reproachful eyes, then she faced away with 'puih', 「Eeeeh, wai-, why—!?!」

When Lux was flustered and he reflexively yelled,

「.....I'm, angry here.」

「Eh.....!?!」

Philuffy puffed up her cheeks slightly with her expression and voice still didn't look or sound like she was angry at all.

「Even though, I promised, to go to crepe stall, together with Lu-chan.」

「Ah.....」

Lux recalled that promise now that she told him.

Because Lux left the country a day earlier in a hurry, he was unable to keep his promise with Philuffy.

「So, sorry Phi-chan! This time there is a circumstance, but next time I'll make up for it without fail, so—」

「.....You, promise?」

After staring still at Lux's panicked face, Philuffy said that to him.

「Yes. That's why, that, if you can forgive me this time—amuh」

When Lux tried to explain, Philuffy let go of him.

And then something softly pushed on the lips of Lux who was getting up.

Looking carefully, it was a cookie that Philuffy often eat.

「Then, for you. The proof of making up.」

Lux was relieved seeing Philuffy showing him a faint smile and he ate the cookie.

The gentle taste of the faint sweetness was melting inside his mouth.

「That's, after this, I have plan to go to the banquet though.....」



Leaving her behind like this would be a bit....., should he take her along with him?

While Lux was thinking of such arrangement, Philuffy slowly stood up.

「I'm being invited by the inn's big wig, so I'll be all right. Later, Lu-chan.」

It seemed Philuffy herself also had business.

They would talk in more detail later and so Lux parted with her for the moment. He then went to the dinner party too.

—

After checking his appearance using mirror, Lux exited the guest room and headed to the second floor.

When he exited into a banquet hall, a spacious fantastical space spread out.

「.....This is, the dinner party of the capital.」

That place Lux was looking at was so bizarre that such muttering reflexively came out.

It was a completely different atmosphere than the dazzling party at the royal capital.

It was quiet and dim, an atmosphere that was like Holy Communion.

Small silverwork candlestick was put on each table, then after being guided to the seat, wine and bread would be served first.

The other food would come after the prayer was finished, it seemed that they would be coming along with the lighting getting brighter.

The lighting only came from unreliable candles, a choir's solemn voice could be heard from the stage.

「For now, I have to wait until Krulcifer-san arrives—」

However, the atmosphere was solemn, and yet he couldn't calm down for some reason.

「Excuse me—, could it be you are alone?」

While Lux was fidgeting, an elegant lady and women of blooming age who

seemed to be her companions suddenly called out to him.

Perhaps they were drunk. Other than strong perfume aroma, they gave off the scent of alcohol.

It seemed although this was Ymir Theocracy, there was also believers who didn't fit into the mold.

「You are a traveler who came for the Pilgrimage Festival aren't you? If you like, how about conversing a bit with us?」

「Tha, thank you very much for your consideration. But I'm, waiting for someone—」

When Lux responded like that while acting bewildered at their invitation, the woman came even closer to him.

「My? She must be a bad woman to leave alone a boy like you. Then while you're waiting, we will keep you company here. We will also pour you some alcohol.」

「N, no, I'm—!?!」

Even while flustered, Lux stiffened, unable to think of how to respond skillfully.

Wondering what to do, Lux fully operated his knowledge he got from his chores, but he didn't have experience avoiding older female.

When Lux became even more bewildered and panicked,

「—I heard that in Pilgrimage Festival, it's the custom to be quiet until the hymn is over you know?」

There, a different girl's voice suddenly came from the side of the women.

「Also, it's still too early to drink alcohol too. And so, I come bringing water.」

With a quiet gesture, that girl's hand put a glass of water on the table.

She was graceful, and yet she gently chided the women with resolute tone.

Just with that gesture, the flowing atmosphere that was teasing Lux was splendidly severed.

「-....., wha, what's with you. Thi, this is a kill-joy. Even though we are expressly trying to have a fun conversation here.」

The women were feeling indignation selfishly and then they left.

After that, that girl quietly sat down while saying 「Excuse me」.

「Eh.....?」

That conduct that was just too natural caused Lux to mutter unconsciously.

He couldn't see her face well because of the dim room, but that beautiful presence caused Lux's heart to skip a beat.

She was wearing a chic dress with stacked up black and purple fabric, and conservative ornament.

The clothing style was calm, suitable for this holy communion, but the chest area that was slightly opened showed an abundant bulge, which made it felt like it emphasized that seductiveness deliberately instead.

「Err, thank you very much for helping me.」

Lux talked to deceive himself from the loud beating of his heart.

Then, the girl sitting beside him chuckled inside the darkness and brought her face closer to Lux with a smile.

「—Thanks is not permitted you know? Aiding you is my job after all.」

「Ee—, eeeeeeh.....!?!」

Lux raised a shocked voice spontaneously seeing the girl's figure.

The new kingdom's Academy's strongest, the duke's daughter who was the captain of Syvalles.

Celistia who was also the aide of Lux who became Seven Dragon Paladins was there in dress appearance.

「Wh, why!? Celis-senpai is in this place—」

She was a girl his senior who he associated a lot in the Academy, but he never imagined that he would reunite with her in this country—furthermore in the inn of this holy capital.

「That's my line Lux. It's troubling that you're going far away arbitrarily.」

Celis was telling him with a tone that was somewhat unusual for her, as though she was chiding a troublesome little brother.

She must have been told how his departure schedule was moved ahead and came to this holy capital after asking Yoruka to give the others his message.

In regard to that, Lux couldn't argue back at all and felt guilty.

「—But, I'm relieved that you are safe. In the future please discuss it with me first before doing something like this.」

But, that girl his senior conveyed to him that she wasn't particularly angry, that she was simply worried about Lux.

「Yes. Next time for sure.」

Lux who noticed that responded to her with a relieved smile.

Then Celis smiled wryly.

「But, I'm also similarly helped, because it's troubling that men have been calling out to me since some time ago. I unconsciously said 『Don't come near me』 to all of them by mistake. I was nervous so—in that sense.....」

「Aaa.....」

Lux comprehended from Celis's muttering that was mixed with a sigh.

「As I thought, senpai is not good with male even outside the Academy.」

「Do, don't make fun of me please!I have been working even harder than before after all.」

Celis hung her head down in embarrassment. Lux smiled wryly seeing that.

「But, if senpai doesn't get strangely tense, surely you will be able to talk with them normally you know? If you can do that, you will be able to get along better with other men—」

「Is that so? Then.....」

Celis looked around the men at the surrounding with a distant look, but then her expression looked like she wasn't really enthusiastic, and then at the end

she turned a faint smile at Lux.

「—No, as I thought I'll refrain for now. Male other than Lux, still feel somewhat scary, so I'll ask you to teach me about male for a bit more first before trying it.」

「I, I see.」

That roundabout talk felt like she was thinking of him as special, which made his heart skipped a beat spontaneously.

At that timing when such atmosphere was flowing, the chair in front of Lux quietly moved.

「It looks like you are enjoying yourself with a beautiful woman aren't you, Lux-kun.」

「Kru, Krulcifer-san!?!」

Krulcifer who came late in dress appearance was talking to him with a fixed stare that looked vaguely cold.

「It was my bad for spending time to finish various kind of troublesome procedures. I never even imagined that you will do something like calling out to other girl even at this country.」

「Tha, that's a misunderstanding Krulcifer-san. Celis-senpai is just, she only came here because she is worried for me—」

Lux made excused while getting flustered, but Krulcifer's attitude was somewhat dissatisfied.

「Glad you could make it Krulcifer. Let's have the piled up talk later.」

「Well, it's not like I didn't anticipate that it will become like this though.」

Krulcifer also sat down with a somewhat resigned tone, then the three started their dinner.

It seemed that they gathered attention from the surrounding as expected, but even so they were able to spend an enjoyable moment.

—

「Even so all of you, no matter how much you all want to meet with Lux-kun,

but isn't this still too much of impatience?」

After they finished dinner and joined up with Philuffy who had finished her business too.

They were walking at the corridor while Krulcifer asked that with sarcasm mixed in her tone.

「That's not really true. In the case that Lux is staying in Einfolk house, there is no way all of us will intrude to there.」

「Don't tell me, you mean.....」

The moment Krulcifer heard Celis's reply, she made a dubious face.

Lux too tilted his head while opening the room's door. It was then a surprising sight leaped into his sight.

「I've been waiting, Lux.」

「Long time no see, Aruji-samamy lord.」

「Lisha-sama!? Yoruka too!?」

Inside the guest room that had been left empty for around a hour, the princess of new kingdom Lizsharte and the former assassin who now introduced herself as Lux's servant—Kirihime Yoruka were there.

Lisha was sitting on the bed in her usual uniform appearance, while Yoruka was kneeling on the floor wearing foreign attire with high degree of exposure and welcomed Lux.

「.....Haa, I wonder why it turned out like this.」

Krulcifer unusually covered her face with her hand and let out a deep sigh. She then averted her gaze.

「In the end everyone came here!? That, the new kingdom and the Academy are—」

Somehow or another, the elite Drag-Knights of the Academy were assembled here.



If there was plan for such members to be away from the Academy, they could ask for the royal capital to dispatch reinforcement of Drag-Knights to Cross Field, but Lux wondered if it was okay this time.

「No worry. The headmaster has arranged for substitute Drag-Knights after all. That's why we too could finally arrive here just now.」

Lisha folded her arms proudly and muttered that.

「And so, everyone came to stay here? Even Yoruka—」

After asking Yoruka to give the others message, Lux also instructed her 『I want you to follow the headmaster's instruction』 after that.

It was because he wanted her to cooperate in case there was danger that visited the Academy.

「Yes. I was tentatively asked by the headmaster-san about what I wish to do, and so I rushed to Aruji-sama's side like this. —Am I being a bother?」

「No, there is no such thing but—」

「That's fortunate. After all serving Aruji-sama is my wish.」

Saying that, Yoruka bowed reverently.

Honestly speaking, it was a bit unexpected that Yoruka was here.

After Lux entrusted only her the matter of conveying his message, he thought she would only abide by his usual order of 『I want you to obey the Academy's norm』, and yet she came here by her own will.

She was a girl who wouldn't hesitate to say that she was a tool, but at the depth of herself there properly was an emotional aspect.

Next if she could get along well with everyone little by little then it would be great but—.

While thinking of such thing, Lux turned to face Lisha again.

「But, for everyone to purposefully come here—could it be」

「.....Yeah. We found out that there is a great danger approaching you two and Ymir Theocracy. We came here in order to inform that and help out.」

Saying that, Lisha spread out on the bed the summarized report—the data regarding the abduction plan that would be carried out in Ymir Theocracy.

And then, six people gathered inside the room for two and a lively strategy meeting began.

Part 3

At the same time, the center of holy capital.

At the snowy landscape where snow was starting to fall very deeply, inside the sanctuary where the lighting was already out, a single woman was standing.

In the ear of the woman who was clad in white robe, *zazaza*- such coarse sound like the sound of sandstorm could be heard.

「—And, what did archbishop-sama said? Because there was enemy attack in the middle of pilgrimage, cancel the Pilgrimage Festival....., there was no way he was saying such thing right?」

The voice of one of the three bosses of Dragon Marauder, the Human Dragon division commander Drakkhen, was reaching the ear of the robed figure at the audience hall inside the sanctuary.

Drakkhen was wearing Drag-Ride at a place far away from the sanctuary, but the robed figure she was talking too didn't wear anything like that.

The two of them weren't conversing using Dragon Voice. By using the Divine Raiment of the Divine Drag-Ride Asp that Drakkhen possessed, the sound from both sides were conveyed to each other and they could exchange words from afar.

「In the first place I'm not going to give any worrying report. Though I told them that the danger in a level that is smaller than what was anticipated has been driven away without any problem.」

「Kukuku, you speak harshly. I too was planning to do the best to my ability with the combat force that I could use in that place though.....」

「Being unwilling to admit defeat is unsightly you know? Is the strength of the so called legendary mercenary is just at that level?」

Drakkhen returned a bitter smile toward the indifferent tone of the robed

figure.

「That sounded really painful for my ear—is what I want to say but, it seems you don't know about this thing called war aren't you?」

「Are you planning to say a clichéd line like you are going to get serious next time?」

「—That's not it. You see, if I won at the battle before my eyes, it won't become victory. In everything first you need information. Trying to obtain victory without even grasping the strength of the opponent is negligent.」

‘Good griefyare yare’ such sighing voice came toward the robed figure.

「Well, the actual problem is, there are also many royalty and nobility who are losing sight of not just strategy, but even the original objective of battle. I have seen many times with these eyes, subordinates who were forced into pointless death because of thoughtless battle based on pride and honor.」

「And because of that, in the end you started up the mercenary force of Drag-Knights called Dragon Marauder? Are the other bosses also the same?」

Drakkhen didn't answer the robed figure's question for a while.

「I'll leave that to your own imagination. More importantly, I'll depend on you so that tomorrow will go as planned okay. It seems that some bunches from new kingdom came, but spare me from even more powerful reinforcement coming to escort this Pilgrimage Festival.」

「It will be my job to take care of that. I'll handle it carefully. Also, what about the remuneration that is my advance payment?」

「Aa, I already delivered that thing. Use it as you like. If this work goes well—, you will finally be able to obtain the seat of archbishop. I'll rely on you okay, Orphel.」

Drakkhen only said that, then a discordant sound that was like sandstorm sound could be heard once more before the sent out voice cut off.

After a few seconds of silence, Bishop Orphel smiled silently.

When she opened a bundle, inside she found a small blade, with only its tip shining with seven colors.

「I still cannot let my guard down, but it's just as planned. With this my wish will also be realized. Oh my god—」

Bishop Orphel closed her eyes and muttered to particularly no one.

And then, sound completely vanished from inside the sanctuary.

—

Part 4

「Fuu..... For the time being this plan should be fine.」

In the high class inn, few hours had passed since Lux reunited with Lisha and others.

The secret message found in Dilwy's room that recorded his exchange with Dragon Marauder, the new kingdom deciphered it and found the plan of kidnapping Pope Nias and the archbishop of Ymir Theocracy. They judged that the enemy would aim for the chance at the Pilgrimage Festival and dispatched Lisha and others, the members of Syvalles.

Furthermore in order to coordinate with Lux and Krulcifer who served as guard for Pope Nias, they were having discussion.

That was the objective.

By the time the exchange of information and planning session were broadly finished, the inside of the room was completely transformed into chaos.

The two beds inside were joined into one with documents scattered out on the sheet. At the nearby table, there were wine, juice, snack, and sweets that they asked the cook to prepare lined up.

It was a room for too that was spacious and comfortable, but as expected it was too cramped for six people.

「It's fine to stay in the inn, but didn't you all reserve other room?」

「I, it can't be helped right!? We suddenly arrived in this time after all—」

Lisha argued with a bitter face against Krulcifer's exasperated voice.

Fortunately, it seemed by paying a lot of fee with the recommendation from Aingram conglomerate, they received permission for six people to stay inside the two people room. It was a situation that was like training camp.

It had already passed the time for going to bed. Outside the window was filled with silence.

「But well, with this the strategy feels like it will go well in outline huh. Fuaaa.....」

Lisha yawned sleepily, while Philuffy was leaning her back on Lux and departed to dreamland.

While thinking of going to bed, Lux suddenly noticed a problem.

「The, then, it will be late at night soon, so I'll go for a bit to the receptionist and borrow a blanket. I'll try asking if the sofa outside can be borrowed.」

As expected, he was unable to say 『sleeping together with everyone in beds for two people』. So Lux made that suggestion and attempted to get out of the room.

But, a few words from Krulcifer calmly stopped him.

「Lux-kun. It seems you are taking the coldness of this country lightly, but if you do such thing, you will freeze to death the next morning you know?」

「.....I, is that so?」

He didn't notice because the girls were around him, but certainly the corridor was shudderingly cold.

Right now that the fire of the hearth had been put off, as expected it felt like sleeping outside was too reckless.

「Then, I too will sleep, together with Lu-chan.」

Philuffy's body was swaying in a doze while she softly gripped at Lux's sleepwear.

「.....If it's two people it won't be cold so, perhaps, it will be fine.」

「Wai-!? What are you planning huh, airhead girl!? Spending a night together with just Lux, such thing—wait, don't sleep while sitting!」

When Lisha was flustered with red cheeks, Philuffy was already letting out a peaceful sleeper's breathing.

While Lux became even more bewildered of what to do,

「Then, I'll serve as Aruji-sama's guard. Even though I look like this, I possess extensive knowledge, so I have confidence in attending Aruji-sama's sexual need.」

「Why is even the objective get changed that much!?!」

Yoruka clapped her hand while making a bright smile, which caused Lux to spontaneously retort.

Actually, to be able to be protected by this girl who was sensitive to people's presence added too with her excellent sword skill should be reassuring, but right now Lux was feeling a danger of another meaning.

「—Both of you. That act is not permitted.」

There, the captain of Syvalles, Celis cut in with firm tone.

「Even from my point of view, I believe that Lux is a boy who is relatively a gentleman, but it will be troubling if two people spend the night together without sleeping close to each other and a mistake is made.」

‘Relatively’Lux was somewhat bothered by that word, but he was relieved with Celis's suggestion.

If this girl who was a disciplined person and their senior took control here, Lux felt like this situation could be settled somehow.

But.....,

「My? That's wholly unexpected. However, I cannot help but worry about Aruji-sama's well-being. The weather is this cold, and there is no guarantee that there won't be anyone aiming for Aruji-sama—」

「Yes. And so, tonight I will look after Lux.」

「.....Eeeh!?!」

Celis threw out her chest proudly while saying that. Lux and Lisha yelled simultaneously.

「If it's me, even in the minute chance that an assassin come I will be able to deal against it with my knowledge of martial arts. Besides, even if I spend a night together with Lux, I happen to have the power of reasoning that will

prevent anything untoward from happening between us.」

Celis asserted decisively with a smile that was overflowing with confidence.

But, Krulcifer was looking at her with a really conflicted expression.

「You are a really troublesome person when you don't have self-awareness like this. Even though your personality is one that is highly probable to go as far as entrusting your body if Lux-kun is the one who is starting it.....」

「Wha-!? Tha, that's rude Krulcifer!? Upon my word I will never—」

Celis's face turned bright red and she averted her gaze away from Lux.

Even Lux would become conscious of 『that』 if their eyes met, so his face also similarly grew heated.

「Eeei! It doesn't matter so everyone just move away! Lux is my knight you know!」

Lisha who was drunk because of the wine became teary eyed, hugged Lux's arm, and she was growing increasingly out of control.

What to do.

At the very least if Lux tried to sleep outside the room, he got a hunch that someone would follow him.

While he was worrying how to make a decision, the girl beside him let out a small sigh.

「It can't be helped. Then let's adopt everyone's opinion instead.」

「Eh.....?」

Everyone else were looking bewildered at Krulcifer's brief words.

And then, after they listened to her suggestion, that plan was carried out.

—

A hour after everyone started sleeping.

Inside the room, the systematic sound of the clock's hand and the tranquil sleeper's breathing of the girls could be heard.

While outside the window snow was falling quietly forming a pile. Lux was

spending an agonizing night.

It wasn't cold, and it also wasn't that stuffy.

And yet, Lux was still unable to sleep from tension and excitement.



On the two beds that were stuck into one, five girls and Lux were lying down.

What Krulcifer suggested was a terribly stimulating plan, for everyone to sleep with Lux at the same place.

If they watched each other, Lux wouldn't commit any mistake, and the girls also wouldn't do anything strange.

With this plan Lux wouldn't freeze outside the room alone, and the probability of an assassin attacking also decreased.

It was a compromise plan that in a sense was extremely rational and prudent.

Although, that was if the state of Lux himself was excluded, with how extremely agonizing this situation was for him.

「.....」

The lighting had been turned off save for one small tallow lamp. It was still all right for him until when they started sleeping.

The girls were lying around Lux with some distance put in between, they were also covered with blanket that hid their sleep-wear from view.

The sweet scent of girls after taking a bath and the sound of their sigh caused his heart to beat fast, but if it was just that he believed he would be able to endure somehow.

—But, perhaps because of the fatigue from long journey using Drag-Ride, it happened starting from Lisha who was the first one asleep.

「.....Lux,I had been waiting all that time. Because, you didn't come to the atelierworkshop.....」

Even though she was a princess, her sleeping habit was bad. She was tossing and turning while sleeping.

Or rather, she had the habit of sleeping in the atelier, so perhaps from that she became able to sleep even in strange position. It caused the blanket covering Lisha to get out of place slightly.

But, her sleeping face was innocent and lovely, from her exposed sleep wear, he could see the swelling of her chest pushing up her underwear and

proclaiming its existence, and her pretty white abdomen.

Lisha's style had some childishness remaining in it, but the faint sensuality that could be perceived from her petite body somehow brought out immoral excitement from him.

(Lisha-sama, she is cute as expected.....)

She was properly thinking of defensive tactic in the meeting before this must not be just from her view point as Drag-Ride developer, but also from a view point as a commander of Drag-Knight.

Her personality was straightforward, but she wasn't a girl who moved just from assumption and impulse.

She was seriously thinking in order to help Lux and Krulcifer and then carried out the plan to realization. Her existence was really reliable.

When Lux gently put back the blanket on such Lisha, her hand clutched Lux's hand tightly.

「Aa.....」

The smooth sensation of that small palm caused Lux's heart to skip a beat.

Her gesture of clutching his hand while still sleeping was like a little kid for some reason, he was unable to shake off that hand.

Everyone who was sleeping here more or less promised, to not touch each other while sleeping.

「Well, surely she would let go before morning, if it's just this much—.....-!？」

When Lux muttered that, his other hand that wasn't clutched by Lisha felt a soft *munyu* sensation.

「Lu-chan..... You will catch cold, don't.....」

Looking there, Philuffy who entered the posture of sleeping together without him noticing was turning sideways while still sleeping. She entwined Lux's arm between her breasts.

The soft sensation of the upper arm, and the girl's sleeping face that had trace of childishness in it.

Just those were already enough to tickle his emotion, and yet she hugged *gyuu*- even stronger.

Lux's arm was buried into Philuffy's abundant breasts. His body was tinged with heat all of a sudden.

「Wai-, Phi-chan. This is bad.....!」

He whispered with small voice so the other girls wouldn't wake up, but his childhood friend didn't let go of Lux's hand while still breathing peacefully.

That soft sensation was conveyed from across the black camisole that was her sleep-wear.

When Lux moved his arm in the attempt to do something, the result was he was enjoying the elasticity of Philuffy's breast even further instead. Blood was rushing to his head more and more.

While he was troubled like that, a soft sensation was suddenly pressing on his head too.

「.....Nn, nnu」

「Wait, even Celis-senpai-!?!」

When Celis turned over right at that timing, her posture became one where her breasts were pushing on Lux's head.

From across the lacey pure white sleep-wear, the elasticity of soft flesh that possessed both springiness and mass that equaled Philuffy was conveyed to him. In addition the scent of opposite sex drifting from the valley melted Lux's brain.

「Lu, Lux, that spot is no good..... That's not, permitted.....」

Perhaps Celis reacted toward his voice, she spoke chidingly, but she was doing exactly the opposite thing.

(I, I can't move! In various meaning.....!)

With this, his left arm, right hand, and even his head were restrained completely by three girls.

In a sense it was profit for him, a situation that was pleasant as a man, but in

the worst case that this kind of situation was seen by Airi, it felt like she wouldn't talk to him for a month.

(Be, besides, doing something like this, with the good excuse that everyone is sleeping—no good!)

When he almost got washed away by the wave of indulgent lust, he somehow endured with his remaining rational senses.

But, he was unable to move at all, so he looked toward Yoruka.

It seemed that she was also sleeping, but perhaps she sensed Lux's presence, just from that the girl opened her eyes in a snap and she turned her face toward Lux on the bed.

「.....」

The girl's two eyes that were of different color from each other blinked and caught Lux's face.

She accepted Lux's gaze that was filled with the thought of asking for help with serious face.

Perhaps she had the disposition of someone who slept lightly from the beginning, it seemed that she grasped the situation just from that.

「—It looks like you are troubled, Aruji-sama.」

Like that, the girl's bewitching lips moved and a calm smile emerged.

When Lux nodded, Yoruka slowly lifted up her upper body before she approached Lux.

This clearheadedness when she had just awakened must be from her natural constitution.

And in addition of her own martial skill that was towering above other people, certainly, there was nobody else who was more suitable to serve as guard other than her.

While her reliability was being deeply impressed in Lux's mind once more, her white slender finger softly touched Lux's sleep-wear, above his lower body—

「—Wait! Why are you trying to take off my underwear!?!」

As soon as Lux's lower body almost got exposed to open air, he spontaneously raised his voice.

「Aruji-sama. Everyone will notice if you speak loudly like that you know?」

Yoruka made a bewitching smile while her hand glided into the underwear.

「Uah.....!? Wait, a second—!?」

When Lux's thigh was caressed by the smooth palm, he felt like his skin was getting goosebumps just from that. While he was enduring the strong urge that was welling up inside, Yoruka's face was approaching the area around Lux's waist and then she stared at him with upward gaze.

「My? Isn't Aruji-sama wishing to clear up your lust using my body?」

Lux's cheeks reddened hearing what Yoruka-said so calmly.

「.....Do you think, that I'll say that in this situation?」

「Even though I'm thinking that surely, Aruji-sama instead want to do it beside everyone while they are sleeping.」

「That's wrong you know!? I don't have that kind of hobby to enjoy such particular thrill you know!」

Lux retorted while inside his heart he sighed in relieve.

Just a little bit more and putting aside his rational sense, it was his body that would lift up the white flag.

「That's not it, I want to get out from the room for a bit, so can you help me out without waking up everyone?」

After telling Yoruka that using small voice until the end, she looked around before nodding.

「How regrettable. But, by your will.」

Instantly Yoruka's hand slipped out from Lux's underwear and then she smoothly crawled on the sheet.

With strength control that wasn't forceful by any means, she moved as though tracing Lux's body and separated the part where Lux and the girls were touching.

「Nn.....」

The girls reacted for a moment with their eyes still closed, but it seemed it wasn't at the level of them waking up.

Lux who was able to escape from the restriction for the time being noticed one thing. He then got out of the room for a moment.

「I'll be waiting here Aruji-sama. Take care.」

Yoruka sat with seiza posture on the bed and bowed. (TN: Seiza, kneeling with the tops of the feet flat on the floor, and sitting on the soles)

Lux averted his eyes because she didn't even try to hide her figure wearing only pure white underwear, while he wore jacket and got out of the room.

There was only minimum lighting at this time, so the area was dim.

Lux headed to in front of the balcony at the third floor. There was a window surface along the wall.

In that place where there was an unbroken view of the holy capital's snowy landscape, a girl was standing bathed in moonlight.

「—I guess praying is something that one have to try to do once in a while. Thanks to that my wish come true.」

The side face of the girl who looked over her shoulder was beautiful, Lux lost all his words in front of it.

Inside the magical mood that was filled with only silence, Lux took a deep breath before long.

「Are you angry, Krulcifer-san?」

When Lux asked that somewhat fretfully, Krulcifer casted down her gaze and looked aside,

「Not really, I'm not angry or anything.」

She said that with a curt tone.

「Yes, it's not like there is anything for me to get angry about. I have also anticipated those girls coming here to chase after Lux-kun. This trip of only the two of us that is the only enjoyment in this homecoming where troublesome

work is pushed at me is now hindered—such thing is completely unrelated. Lux-kun too, you look happy that everyone came for you after all.」

(.....Wait, she is totally peevish-!?)

That attitude of averting her gaze standoffishly while speaking dispassionately was something Krulcifer never showed until now.

‘What to do’, Lux thought in panic.

「Just kidding.」

Suddenly the girl smiled mischievously and she brushed up her hair calmly.

「I thought that if I was gone, surely you will come looking for me. More importantly, come over here. There is something I want to show to you.」

Prompted like that, Lux stood beside Krulcifer.

That sight spread out at the other side of the glass window that covered a surface of the wall.

「Aa.....」

A speechless mutter leaked out from the mouth of Lux who saw that.

Bluish white radiance from reflected light of snow faintly illuminated the holy capital’s townscape. He could take the whole view with a sweep of the eye from this window.

It was like a solemn scenery that was depicted by number one painter of the world.

Lux forgot to even breath for a while taking in that sight.

「I think it was a few years after I was adopted? There was time when Einfeld house stayed in this inn after the Pilgrimage Festival was over. It was the last memory, of the time when I still wasn’t that estranged with my family.」

「.....」

「The rampage of Ruin one and half a year ago. When I was swallowed by a cave-in, someone pulled at my hand from inside the collapsed rubbles while they were soaked in blood, without reconsidering injuries to themselves.」

She closed her eyes in reminiscence and muttered with her hands on her chest.

She was making a self-depreciating smile that vaguely looked lonely.

「At the time, Tou-san was also able to use Drag-Ride. I thought it was him who came to save me, but when I woke up he didn't come to meet me. When I asked him, he only answered 『I don't know』.」

「Krulcifer, san.....」

While Lux was unable to speak and stood still, the girl suddenly changed her words.

「More importantly, it's about that child. Before the dining party just now, I was talking with Ney Louches who I called to this inn. I used my authority as this so called Xfer.」

It seemed that was the reason that Krulcifer was late.

She taught Lux bit by bit about her conversation with Ney while staying vigilant to the surrounding just in case.

It seemed that Ney Louches came out from the Ruin slightly a while ago due to some spur of the moment. She temporarily relinquished her authority as the Ruin's manager and started taking action.

There she was discovered and picked up by the archbishop. Ney who was an Automata was treated as god's messenger, the 『angel』, and she became an existence that was concealed by the church.

Ney's existence didn't come to light was because the faith of the archbishop was deep.

The archbishop didn't even let Ney to purposefully approach the Ruin in order to recover her memory.

But, recently because of the Abyss that went out from Ruin getting stronger, and their frequency of appearance was also increasing, the bishops who knew the truth proposed a plan to use Ney to investigate the Ruin.

And then by using the pilgrimage this time, they were planning to use Ney to casually investigate.

「Then, don't tell me, Krulcifer-san was called back for the Pilgrimage Festival this time was—」

「It's impossible for it to be a coincidence. Knowing that my origin is from Ruin, they must be intending to test whether I can be used for something while using Ney at the same time. At the very least my Tou-san should also know about this.」

At present, Ney only told the upper brass of this country that she was the Gear Leader of Hall and nothing else.

And then, it seemed that Krulcifer also forbid Ney to speak to other about this talk.

「Ney Louches.....what are they planning to do with her?」

The last destination at the pilgrimage—the ceremony of Pilgrimage Festival would end tomorrow at the old sanctuary site.

「According to that child, it seem from the underground of the old underground site, we can use teleportation to enter into the Ruin's archive, the room where information is managed. Of course, that's only if there is the authority of XferKey's Supervisor that I have though.」

Putting aside whether they should tell this country about it honestly or not, by doing that they would be able to investigate about the mystery of Ruin.

And then, they would also be able to investigate about Krulcifer's wish too, of how she wanted to know about her true identity.

「Krulcifer-san, are you okay with that?」

「I don't mind. It's unrelated with Einfolk house. I intend to know everything there, for my own sake.」

Her tone sounded like she was trying to stifle down something.

Even while thinking that it was unlike her, Lux couldn't stop her. He nodded silently.

「I understand. I too will help with the Ruin's investigation as much as possible.」

「I'm depending on you, prince.」

Krulcifer abruptly smiled and caressed Lux's cheek just like her usual self.

「Then, how about we return to the room soon. If we don't hurry, everyone will come after Lux-kun and gathered here again.」

Lux smiled wryly with a really complex look before they returned to the room.

Like that, the long day finally came to an end.

Episode 4 – The Subjugator, Mel Gizalut

Part 1

「Uu—, AAAaAAH.....!」

Near the cathedral located at the north of the holy capital, inside a room of a lodging house for high ranked monk or Sanctuary Knight Order to sleep.

At the time of dawn where it was still dark outside, a high-pitched scream resounded.

「Haa, haah! Haa.....! Haa.....」

Mel was breathing roughly with heaving shoulders on top of the bed in sitting posture.

She confirmed the situation around her and embraced the Sword Device leaning on the wall.

「.....How hopeless. Only this dream hasn't changed since that day seven years ago.」

She embraced her body that was trembling from the lingering memory of the bad dream with her own two hands to hold it in.

The terror and despair from losing her whole family due to the rampage of Ruin seven years ago.

And then the burning rage inside the chest made Mel Gizalut's body to tremble.

「Why, even though today isn't that day.....」

She bit her lower lip hard and let out a voice with a grieving expression.

「Even though I won't lose if today is that day. Otou-samafather and Okaa-samamother too, Onii-samabig brother and Onee-samabig sister too—even my little sister, I won't let them die if it's today, and yet!」

She pulled out the Sword Device from the sheath and muttered while gazing at the beautiful blade of two colors that was glistening.

Divine Drag-Ride Ddraig Gwiber, it was a prize that was bestowed to Mel after she was defeated by Krulcifer at the military art tournament due to Bishop Orphel's proposal to the archbishop.

Although she lost due to decision, but thinking about the future prospect and strength of her who polished her skill until that far in that short time, it was fitting for her to receive it. It seemed that was the reason, but Mel thought that surely it was just the reason at the surface.

Wasn't it actually something like consolation reward for Gizalut house after dying in the line of duty and also because of all their contribution in the past as member of Sanctuary Knight Order that was directly subordinate to the pope? At first she was doubting it like that.

But—,

「Mel, you have nightmare again?」

- Knock knock* After that light knocking sound, Bishop Orphel entered inside the room.

「.....I'm fine. It's a usual thing.」

Seeing Mel wiped her sweat and said that, Orphel walked toward her with uneasy look.

She sat down beside the bed, then she hurriedly put on a coat above Mel's white underwear.

「Bishop-sama is a worrywart like usual. Shouldn't you worry about his eminence the pope instead as his aide?」

Even while talking sarcastically, Mel didn't reject that good will and smiled.

Orphel who heard her words also didn't look offended, she merely spoke with chiding tone.

「It's no good for a girl to let their body get cold you know? You are a strong and smart child, but you are still careless in that kind of area.」

Saying that, she made Mel's hand grasped a warm stone that was wrapped with fabric.

Her body that was starting to get cold was warmed, and her heartbeat was recovering its calm.

「.....」

The bishop with years of long service in the church—Orphel. Mel always thought that she was a mysterious woman.

In this country, bishop who engaged in politic and ceremony usually wouldn't get deeply involved with the Sanctuary Knight Order that was military.

Because both sides shouldered important authority in the country, there was regulation so both sides wouldn't be too closely connected.

And yet for some reason, since the incident seven years ago Orphel frequently came to check Mel's condition.

Even though she never even heard that Orphel had particular friendship with Gizalut house.

(Really. Just what is this person thinking I wonder—)

No one was talking about it openly, but the number of fellow who talked badly about the relationship of Mel and Orphel wasn't few.

Orphel was aiming for the hidden fortune of Gizalut house, or she was taking advantage of the lonely girl's weakness, or she was trying to win over the powerful person who became a member of Seven Dragon Paladins, etc, etc. There were many kind of rumor.

Mel was a clever girl, so she immediately understood that kind of method with ulterior motive.

But for some reason, she didn't harbor animosity toward Orphel.

She didn't really understand why, but it might be because Orphel never gave her cheap consolation.

When she had only lost her family, various people called out to Mel in pity.

—

『You must not lose heart. Because god is always watching over your hard work.』

『Don't lose. This too is a trial that is given to you.』

『Let's offer a prayer. If you do that then surely the time will come when your heart too will receive salvation.』

—

—Don't screw around.

That was what Mel was thinking even while nodding smilingly at the surface.

She didn't know how much her heart was hurt until now by those very cheap consolations.

The people giving those consolations themselves didn't have the slightest ill will, so it caused even more anger to well up inside.

Both her parents were devoured to death by monster before her eyes, her everything was suddenly stolen unreasonably. After such thing, how could she believe in god or anything?

It was only Orphel who had never said such thing even once to Mel.

She only asked things like, 'is there something troubling you? Are you hungry? Don't you feel cold? How is your health?', and so on, after that she would talk about trivial thing with her, and stayed at her side longer than anyone else.

She visited the lodging house every morning, and looked after Mel when she was tormented by bad dream.

When Mel was injured or when she was sick, Orphel would nurse her throughout the night.

That was why, Mel was harboring emotion that was similar to deep affection toward this woman called Orphel.

She even thought, 'If only she is my real mother.....'.

(I too am foolish huh. Even this person, it's highly possible that she is trying to use me, and yet—) Her obtaining the Divine Drag-Ride Ddraig Gwibel, her becoming Seven Dragon Paladins too, everything was because of the endorsement of Orphel who volunteered as Mel's guardian.

Of course, Mel herself had the conceit that her strength was the best even in Ymir Theocracy, but she could sense some kind of motive from Orphel.

But, even so, there was a side of herself who felt that the woman's existence and feeling were pleasant.

(In the end, I too am still a child even if I'm called the prodigy of Ymir am I.) Even while she was laughing at herself inside her heart, she couldn't do anything at all regarding her feeling.

When human was weak, they would harbor good will toward their ally.

She was thinking that she didn't want to be abandoned by this person, that she wanted to answer her expectation.

「Mel, you have talent. Proof it by obtaining achievement in the pilgrimage this time okay? If you do that, everyone will recognize you. You won't—feel lonely anymore.」

「You cannot make use of me just by buttering me up you know?」

Mel chuckled and stood up from the bed.

「But, I'll show you how I raise the greatest achievement as guard this time too, I will win against Krulcifer only for my own sake, that's all. I won't pray to both god and angel.」

「As expected, you can be charged with lese majeste because of those words.」

Even while smiling wryly at Mel who was saying such thing while being a believer herself, Orphel didn't reprimand her.

「It will be preparation time soon. I'll look forward to it, as your guardian.」

Orphel only said that and exited the room quietly.

From the grey sky that was visible from the window, light sleet was starting to

fall.

—

Part 2

The morning of the last day of the Pilgrimage Festival.

Lux and Krulcifer first headed to the departure place that was the sanctuary as planned.

At the same time, Lisha and others also used horse carriage to accompany them to the sanctuary. When they arrived, they made the offer of cooperation in order to stop the kidnapping plan of the Dragon Marauder.

「I understand. As an allied country, I gratefully accept the assistance of the elites from New Kingdom Atismata.」

It seemed Pope Nias was surprised, but after consulting with the bishop, he immediately accepted.

Although, Lisha and others wouldn't accompany the pilgrimage of the pope.

The aim of Dragon Marauder was split into two at present.

In the description of the secret message that Dilwy left, it was written that the kidnapping target would be the archbishop or the pope, either of them.

While Pope Nias was carrying out ceremony at the old sanctuary site nearby the Hall, Lisha and others would stand by at the holy capital where the archbishop was staying. It was arranged so that their combat force would be applied as the situation demanded.

Fifty elites of Sanctuary Knight Order, Lux, Krulcifer, and Mel, they served as the pope's guard just like before. It seemed that it was decided that line up was fundamentally enough.

「I wish to accompany Lux as an aide of a Seven Dragon Paladins but.....it cannot be helped with our strategy. Please leave this side to us.」

Celis gave out only a little bit of sign of feeling disappointed, even so she

straightened her back and threw out her chest.

When Lux nodded, Philuffy suddenly peered with unblinking gaze at Lux's face.

「Uwah!? Phi, Phi-chan!？」

「Lu-chan. It's no good unless you properly sleep at night you know?」

It seemed that she saw through Lux's lack of sleep in an instant.

Well, one of the cause of it was related to Philuffy though—,

「Also, it's no good, if you fight while worrying too much you know?」

「Eh.....?」

Lux was surprised when Philuffy told him that indifferently with her usual serious face.

Even though he didn't say anything about Krulcifer and the Ruin, and also about Ney Louches.

She softly caressed Lux's hair *pon pon*, and then gave him a soft smile.

「If Lu-chan's feeling isn't mistaken, surely it will be fine.」

「.....Yes. Thank you.」

Even without her knowing the detail of the circumstance, Philuffy's words mysteriously were able to relieve him.

When his feeling was turning peaceful like that, Lisha finally came last.

「Be careful okay Lux.Also, don't flirt too much with Krulcifer.」

「Ahaha.....」

「Come back safely for sure. The safety of his eminence the pope is also important, but you are my knight after all.」

「Yes. I absolutely won't do anything that make Lisha-sama sad.」

When Lux smiled like that, Lisha averted her eyes just slightly while offering her hand slowly.

After Lux took that hand and squeezed back, he also finished greeting Yoruka

lightly.

The preparation of Pope Nias was also finished, and the elites of Sanctuary Knight Order got into the horse carriage.

But, the assistant sister who was usually riding together on the pope's carriage, Ney Louches came in front of Lux and others.

「Due to Orphel-sama's command, today I will accompany Xf....., not that, Krulcifer-sama and others dearimasu. Please take care of me.Fuu, I almost expose the whole secret completely there dearimasu, good grief.」

After holding up her hand in front of her face with a snap, Ney averted her face and muttered.

Lux and Krulcifer who saw that looked at each other's face with wry look.

「That's why your true feeling is leaking all over though....., perhaps it's a blunder to include this child into the plan. No matter how long it has been since she was last serviced just like she said, she is still a bit too much of a piece of junk.」

「Tha-, that's cruel dearimasu! Even though Ney look like this, Ney is a child that can do it if she try dearimasu. Ney also hasn't said to anyone about that plan—muguwah」

Lux and Krulcifer who went pale hearing her words wasted no time to block her mouth.

It seemed the surrounding didn't hear, so they immediately got into the horse carriage before even more mistake could be made.

They departed to the last pilgrimage location, the old sanctuary site near the entrance of Hall.

Next, would Dragon Marauder came to kidnap Pope Nias just like the information the new kingdom obtained?

Or else, would that be a diversion and instead they would attack the holy capital to suppress the cathedral where the archbishop was at?

And then, would Lux be able to head to the Hall's archive following Ney's guidance?

A day where various thinking was interlacing started.

—

Part 3

Ten-odd minutes later, they arrived at the old sanctuary site without any accident.

It seemed the ceremony here would take long, Lux and other who found opportunity planned to accomplish their objective.

Krulcifer would use the supervisor authority she possessed from underground the old sanctuary site, teleported to the archive of Hall, and obtained information of the past.

Ney Louches was given detailed instruction by Pope Nias—or more accurately the upper brasses of the church who were advising him, to investigate the inside of the Ruin together with Krulcifer.

But, the pope and the bishops didn't know about Automata's trait that was obedient toward Xfer. Krulcifer turned the table through that. She would investigate the Hall's archive along with Lux and aimed to be a step ahead in investigating about her true identity and the objective of the existence that was called as LordCreator.

While Pope Nias was preparing for the ceremony, the eldest son of Einfolk house, Zain came talking to Krulcifer.

「Don't loiter around too much. Our duty in the end is to guard his eminence the pope, and for you to raise an achievement that doesn't lose to Mel Gizalut.」

His tone sounded chiding, but there was no particular malice that could be sensed from ti.

Therefore Krulcifer too merely returned a simple question to Zain.

「I know. More importantly, is Otou-sama participating in today's pilgrimage?」

She quietly turned around and stared at the back.

A man in his prime using a cane—the father of Krulcifer, Stiyl Einfeldt was for some reason looking this way from afar along with Alterize who was acting as guard.

His foot was bad because of old wound. Perhaps because he had a body that couldn't wear Drag-Ride, he was beside the horse carriage that was some distance away.

The old sanctuary site that was near the Hall had been predicted beforehand that it would be dangerous, and yet for him to intentionally come here was certainly an unnatural act but—.

「I also told him. That the position of Einfeldt house doesn't matter, just today father should restrain from coming. But, he is obstinate like that, he said to me 『There is a need for me to come』 and won't listen.」

「.....」

Lux ignored Zain's grumbling and stared at Stiyl who was standing at distance.

He didn't understand his true intention, but to him it looked like he was somewhat concerned with Krulcifer's condition.

「Perhaps unexpectedly, it can be that father also come here to watch your achievement?」

「No way such thing is true, absolutely.」

Krulcifer calmly cut down the words from her big brother that was filled with sarcasm.

「Even though, he didn't come to save me at that time.....」

She muttered that with a lonely look before slowly entering into the old sanctuary site.

「—Excuse me.」

「I, I'm going too dearimasu!」

Lux also excused him with a brief words to Zain, and then he along with Ney followed behind Krulcifer.

The Sanctuary Knight Order including Mel was already going ahead. If the old

sanctuary site had to be described with few words, it was a mysterious place.

Different from the Ruin, it wasn't a structure that existed from ancient time, but a great sanctuary of Ymir Theocracy that was build around two hundred years ago.

Lux heard that the entrance to the Hall was accidentally discovered near this site.

Deep at the center there was a large altar. Even in its state with the ceiling collapsed and the sky was visible, the vestige of solemn atmosphere could be sensed.

There was a stair continuing to underground beside the mountain of rubble, because there was the risk of cave-in over there, it was forbidden to enter with a chain.

That was exactly—the entrance toward Hall that was their aim this time.

「It seems the Ruin is silent. Scout was dispatched last night and it was investigated, but there wasn't even a single Abyss from here until the entrance of Hall that was around a kl from here.」

「I see, thank you for your effort. I will begin the prayer ceremony now. Olpher, I'll entrust you with assisting me.」

After the captain of Sanctuary Knight Order counseled Pope Nias, the bishop Orphel moved to aid with the ceremony.

Ritual tools for the prayer were lined up. The last ceremony of the Pilgrimage Festival would begin from here.

But, even after understanding that there was no reaction of Abyss nearby, it was possible that an ambush like yesterday could happen.

A total of fifty-odd Drag-Knights took position like their plan at the beginning without letting down their guard.

Lux and Krulcifer, and also Ney were placed to guard the inside of the old sanctuary site following the instruction of Pope Nias and Orphel.

Just as instructed by the top brass of the church that was conveyed through Pope Nias, Krulcifer whose origin was from Ruin and the Automata Ney were

tasked to bring back treasure and information from the Hall.

However, the moment they descended down the stair, Ney was scared toward the depth of the darkness that was gaping wide open.

「Uwaaa. It's dark! It's scary! Ney is not good against mouse and bat dearimasu!」

「Is that so? How pitiful. But, I'll have you walk ahead so do your best.」

「Hiiii! The supervisor-sama here is inhuman dearimasu! U, understood, I will handle it carefully.Even so it's cruel dearimasu, you are a type that will be hated by man, wait, oh nooo!」

(As always, the voice of her heart is leaking out.....)

Lux unconsciously smiled wryly while beside him Krulcifer made a small sigh.

「It's not like I want to harass you. With the narrowness of this passage, Drag-Ride cannot be deployed, so I thought that you as an Automata will have easier time to detect danger. That's all. No matter how long you have been separated from the Ruin, you still at least have that function right?」

「Uuu, I understand dearimasu. I will do my best somehow.」

「I'll depend on you, Ney. I'm holding hope for your real ability. You are a child who can do it when you try aren't you?」

「Wo, woof-! Ple, please leave it to me!」

When Krulcifer patted the head of Ney who was nodding tearfully, her eyes sparkled and she recovered her liveliness.

(She tamed her in this short time.....!)

Was it Krulcifer's wiles that was amazing, or perhaps it was Ney who was simple.

In any case without even any time for Lux to feel admiration, Ney took the initiative and began walking through the collapsed underground passage.

Fortunately, perhaps because it was cold and there was no food, there wasn't any mouse or anything like Ney was worried about.

Just, rubbles were scattered everywhere, so it was hard to walk combined

with the darkness.

「It's not as deep as I thought, if there is sign of fighting, we will also be able to return quickly.」

「Yes. even if the opponent planned to split their force, we cannot let our guard down. The Drag-Knight who is the mastermind of the kidnapping plan, a division commander of Dragon Marauder, Drakkhen, I heard that she is a clever person who excel in forming strategy.」

「Yes. Besides, I'm also worried about Krulcifer-san's father and brother.」

「.....」

Krulcifer didn't reply to Lux's muttering.

Her side face that was illuminated faintly by the lighting of torch was also in her usual cool expression.

「Lux-kun, do you dislike me who keep putting distance with my family?」

「Eh.....?」

The girl's sudden words that was also similar like talking to herself caused Lux to raise a bewildered voice.

Even so Krulcifer kept looking forward and continued walking quietly.

「I noticed. You were calling out to my family in place where I wasn't looking. You were trying to obtain some kind of information, regarding my discord with my family.」

「.....Sorry. It wasn't my intention, to hide it though.」

She must be referring to Lux giving present to Krulcifer's little sisters, or talked to her father.

「You don't need to apologize. I'm not angry or anything.」

Her lips abruptly relaxed and she turned a gentle smile to him.

「Rather, I want to say my gratitude instead. I'm happy that you are trying to ascertain in my place, whether I really cannot get along with my family for the second time anymore. But—I myself, don't really understand my own feeling.」

In the past, Krulcifer found out that she was born from Ruin.

Since then, a gulf was created between her and her family.

And then, she was banished from Ymir to the new kingdom.

In the new kingdom, thinking that if she was able to solve the mystery of the Ruin, wouldn't she be able to meet her true family, she entrusted her wish to that.

Krulcifer herself was wavering in her heart even now.

「Should I try to meet my family halfway one more time, even after thinking of it for the whole night, the answer didn't come out.」

Even if right now she entered the archive of the Hall and obtained some kind of truth, she would still waver.

That was why, as an important friend of her, Lux said the answer.

「—I am Krulcifer-san's ally. No matter what happened, for sure.」

「That's right isn't it.」

Krulcifer chuckled and showed a smile at Lux's serious expression.

Right after that, Ney who was going ahead stepped her foot on an open place.

「We arrive dearimasu. Xfer-sama, Lux-sama.」

It was hard to see because of the dimness of the place, but it was a space that was like cone shaped hall.

Deeper inside, there was a wall that wasn't made from stone, a metal wall that had weird pattern arranged on it.

「From this we can trespass into inside the Hall, toward the archive dearimasu. And then—here they come. Twelve Abysses appeared on the surface of old sanctuary site.」

「—!？」

Lux and Krulcifer lifted their face with alert expression.

This hall that was beside the door that connected to the Ruin had high ceiling. There was space to summon Drag-Ride.

In addition, if the ceiling was destroyed, it would be accompanied with the danger of collapse but it would be possible to escape.

「There is no large type Abyss, but what should we do supervisor-sama? If we go until the viewing room that is nearby the archive, we can even observe the surface from there dearimasu, we can also return using teleport but—」

Should they head out to help right now, or else would they go in a hurry toward the viewing room after finishing their business at the archive.

The elite force of fifty Drag-Knights made from a lot of High Class and above was a battle force that could oppose twelve Abysses.

Furthermore, right now Mel of Seven Dragon Paladins and Alterize who was EX Class were also there.

But, if reinforcement of Abyss or Dragon Marauder came at the middle, there was also the possibility of Krulcifer's step brother Zain and her step father Stiyl getting exposed to danger.

「I—」

「Wait! I'll try contacting Alterize-san!」

Lux quickly pulled out his Sword Device, summoned his Wyvern and equipped it.

And then he used Dragon Voice to send his voice to Alterize's EX Wyvern.

If the enemy was noticed by Drake's radar, she should also be wearing her Drag-Ride.

The prediction of Lux who was thinking like that was right on the spot, a connection with her was immediately linked.

『Lux-sama? Did something happen in the underground? Currently here we are in the middle of battle with appearing Abysses. Their number is twelve, and there are three types, Gargoyle, Chimera, and also Haiit.』

That lineup wasn't weak, but she and the other Drag-Knights there should be able to oppose that number and types of Abysses.

Lux asked for some more detail just in case.

「Other than that, is there enemy reinforcement?」

『The Drake force of Sanctuary Knight Order is searching for reaction of Abyss and Drag-Rode, but for the time being none can be found in the area. We had also confirmed the sound of this rumored horn flute, but the one sounding it seemed to leave immediately.』

The conversation between Lux and Alterize were also heard by the two girls beside him.

When Lux told that to Alterize, Alterize gave a push on the back.

『Ojou-sama, please advance forward. We will hold on at this side.』

「—I understand. Take care of Einfoolk house.」

Krulcifer told Alterize that without going as far as saying ‘family’.

From the beginning, the true objective of the Pilgrimage Festival this time was at here.

The girl who originated from Ruin, Krulcifer, and the Automata that came out from the Ruin, Ney Louches.

The mission was for the two to combine their strength and solve the mystery of the Ruin.

When Krulcifer lifted up her hand to the metal wall, words made from light ran through the surface and it was tinged with dazzling radiance.

『.....’s existence is confirmed. The unlocking of special code is executed. If there is no problem, teleportation will begin.』

Inorganic strange voice could be heard resounding directly inside the brain.

It was the same phenomenon that also occurred when they once investigated the altar in the Garden.

With the authority toward Ruin that Krulcifer possessed, it was possible to infiltrate from a special route.

「Then, we are going in dearimasu!」

Along with Ney’s call, light enveloped the surrounding.

Right after that, they received sensation as though floating in the darkness, and when they noticed it was as though they were standing in different place.

A passage made from inorganic silver colored wall was spreading before their eyes.

The surrounding was tinged with faint light in reaction to their existence.

「—This place, is inside the Hall.....?」

「Yes dearimasu! After a long time I have returned to the home I missed so muuuch! Waaaai!」

Perhaps feeling great delight from being able to return to the Ruin, Ney's dog ears stood up then she jumped *pyon pyon* up and down.

But Krulcifer plopped her hand on Ney's head with a quiet expression.

「My bad, but right now we have no time. Can you guide us to the archive here, so we can also quickly return to the surface?」

「Ro, roger dearimasu!」

Ney straightened her posture in a snap, then she quickly began to walk through the corridor.

Each side began to act with various feelings kept concealed inside the chest.

—

Part 4

—At the same time. Two hundred members of Sanctuary Knight Order as well as cooperator from new kingdom, Lisha and co who received information of the kidnapping plan, they took their post and performed security with maximum vigilance.

Anywhere in the holy capital that was the capital city of Ymir was important position, but in this day that was the last day of the Pilgrimage Festival, it was the cathedral at the northern part that was the most heavily guarded.

The believers in this country had no method of transportation to visit all the pilgrimage spot.

Most believers would get through with it by staying home or visiting the nearest church. But the nobles whose position as believer wasn't low had the custom to spend half a day offering prayer in this cathedral to make up not doing pilgrimage.

Furthermore, right now this place was also the residence of the archbishop.

The aim of Dragon Marauder's kidnapping plan was Pope Nias as well as the archbishop. From that point, a method to not gather the important people in the cathedral to avoid needless danger was also considered.

But, the result of the discussion caused such method to be dismissed because of two reasons.

The first reason, because the stage of the battle would be the holy capital itself, in the case that the important people were scattered everywhere, it would make it harder instead to protect them.

The other reason, was so that the Dragon Marauder wouldn't realize that their kidnapping plan had already become known by this side.

By all rights, if the noble believers didn't gather in large number at the

cathedral, the enemy would also notice that their plan had been exposed.

Thus, this time Lisha and co were also placed in hidden position..

The waiting place for the four was on a stone balcony protruding out from the cathedral's third floor.

「Fuu. At any case this country is really cold....., feels like I'll freeze just by staying outside.」

Lisha blew out white breath to her hands that were rubbing on each other while her body shivered.

She was wearing fur coat on her body, but right under it was her pilot suit.

「How about warming up inside? If it's keeping watch, we will do it for a while.」

「No, that's no good.」

Celis beside her was being considerate, but Lisha immediately shook her head.

「Those Dragon Marauder bunches are aiming at this chance, victim might appear even if we are late just by several seconds. Besides—Lux too should be feeling the same coldness about this time.」

Lisha straightened her back and acted tough. Celis's expression loosened seeing that.

「Consuming stamina before the fight will bring nothing good you know?」

「Both of you, here.」

There, Philuffy who was snacking on cookie at the back presented something with her empty hand.

It was hot rock wrapped in fabric. Lisha and Celis accepted that and said thanks.

「Even so, that ero woman is a willful one like usual.」

Among the reinforcement force from new kingdom, it was only Yoruka who was at the rooftop of the cathedral instead of staying at the designated position.

In order to perform defense, Lisha and co were guided to a place where it would be easy to receive instruction from Ymir's side, but it seemed Yoruka's decision was different.

『My objective is to annihilate Aruji-sama's enemy.』

She asserted that, then said how the field of vision here was bad and left from the designated waiting place.

「Are you worried? Lisha-sama?」

「Wro-wrong, I'm not! No matter what happen to that indecent ero woman, that's not my business! Just, that—as the representative of the new kingdom, it's troubling that she is acting as she please!」

Lisha responded slightly panicked at Philuffy's question.

「How nice. To have someone to fuss for you—」

Celis was watching that smilingly while muttering. Right after that, a voice roared from behind.

「E, enemy attack—a messenger came from the Drake's defensive line! It's a large swarm of flying Abyss!」

Lisha and co who heard that tensed their expression and pulled out their Sword Device.

「We are going to finish this before Lux arrive. —Let's go, everyone!」

They quickly wore the Drag-Ride they summoned and the battle began.

—

Part 5

On the other hand, the old sanctuary site.

Right after the tone of flute horn resounded, twelve Abysses attacked, but the guards of the pope were fighting in advantage.

「GI, iiiiH.....!」

A Haiit was screaming in a shriek, then its burned body was crushed.

「—Looks like they don't learn anything from the previous defeat eh, this so called division commander of Dragon Marauder.」

The Sanctuary Knight Order was alert due to the previous attack and the information from new kingdom. They fought bravely, but even among them, Mel's movement was the best by far.

Land battle form and flying form.

The Divine Drag-Ride Ddraig Gwiber that possessed the function of switching two types of form was freely controlled by her. Abysses were defeated one after another.

She accelerated on snowy wasteland with the wheels and cut down the enemy with a heavy attack from her Halberd.

Against Haiit that possessed hard fur, the attack scattered fire and burned the enemy.

She struck down Gargoyle that was dancing midair in high speed with a squall, and when the enemy's movement dulled she fired her Cannon.

The true identity of the squall was Ddraig Gwiber's armament, or perhaps the power of its Divine Raiment.

In any case, she was seeing through the Abyss's trait instantly and got rid of them through the shortest time and shortest distance.

She was overwhelming the swarm of Abyss with brilliance as though she was in a dance performance.

「—This is lacking. If it's like this, should I go to guard the holy capital instead?」

The swift and accurate attack of Mel stole even the eyes of her fellow elites from the Sanctuary Knight Order.

「She changed this much just in one and half year.....?」

「What unbelievable girl..... And she is still 13 years old?」

Alterize who drove EX Wyvern and defeated two Abysses muttered in amazement.

In addition, the eldest brother Zain was cooperating with several Drag-Knights to fight. When they finally finished off an Abyss, there were only around two Abysses remaining.

「As expected from our country's Seven Dragon Paladins. The pilgrimage this time is fraught with danger, but as expected Mel is exactly the one worthy of obtaining meritorious deeds.」

Pope Nias was muttering with admiring expression. Bishop Orphel also showed a smile hearing that.

「Those generous words of praise are truly an honor. She too surely will be delighted. —Mel Gizalut, come down!」

Orphel took a deep breath, then she raised her voice toward the sky.

Mel who had just shot down the last Gargoyle at that timing quickly landed down before her along with Ddraig Gwibel in Wyvern Mode.

「There is no more Abyss in sight. This area should be safe. And so, there is a place I wish for you to head toward right away.」

「You like to handle your subordinate roughly aren't you? Then, is it protecting the archbishop in the capital next?」

Ymir Theocracy's Sanctuary Knight Order—the Drag-Knights main force was split up with a portion protecting Pope Nias as guard.

In exchange four Divine Drag-Ride users from the new kingdom were placed to cooperate with the protection of the holy capital, but a communication came that the number of Abyss appearing at the other side was a lot more than here.

The normal practice was for them to retreat, while having Mel who excelled in exterminating Abyss to go back ahead.

—

—But, until this point it was the conspiracy of Drakkhen and Orphel.

「This country is also really pitiful. For them to put that kind of wicked woman on the seat of bishop.」

A Drag-Knight of Dragon Marauder was laughing with the corner of his lips raised in a smirk.

At the vicinity of Hall below, security guards that were fewer than usual were standing.

This was exactly the real aim that Drakkhen was talking with Orphel.

If they stepped inside the Ruin Hall that was currently increasing in activity, the Ruin would react and new Abysses would flow out.

By manipulating those Abysses with horn flute, they could secure a lot of combat force.

In other words, the kidnapping of the archbishop as well as the pope was diversion in order to split the theocracy's battle force, creating this opening.

For the sake of this strategy, Dragon Marauder had joined hand with Bishop Orphel since around a year ago.

Assassinating the archbishop, took the pope hostage, then obtained fund by exchanging hostage with the Drag-Ride and treasure that the theocracy possessed.

As compensation, Bishop Orphel would succeed the seat of archbishop, and she would run a puppet government using Pope Nias who was still a child as figurehead.

『—Now then, you also has sent the combat force over there toward the holy

capital as planned, we are going to ransack the Ruin with no worry now.』

Drakkhen's voice was sent to Orphel's ear.

If it was toward a designated location, the voice could even be adjusted into a whispering voice that other people couldn't hear.

The power to manipulate and made sound freely.

That was the Divine Raiment of Divine Drag-Ride Asp that Drakkhen had.

Therefore—the sound of horn flute that originally was for manipulating Abyss on the whole at wide range, with this power she was able to send the sound separately, executing multiple tactics.

A voice came back from Orphel at the old sanctuary ground toward the snickering Drakkhen.

「That's so, isn't it. But it's better to be careful you know? Even if it's you the legendary mercenary—, you aren't a match against my Mel.」

『.....What did you say?』

Right after Drakkhen gave that respond, the air of the cold weather ripped, and violent sound of slicing air roared.

When the Dragon Marauder squad of five people in the air noticed that, their defeat was already set in stone.

「—Agah!?!」

Immediately after, a Wyvern was knocked down by Ddraig Gwibel's Halberd.

Its back wings were smashed and the Drag-Knight fell toward the ground in a straight line. Red flame blast bloomed on the snow field.

「I believe all of you are a bit too careless. Or else, don't you even know the basic? Drag-Knight using flying type should always be alert toward their above and back you know?」

「Yo, you bastard-!?!」

The troop of Dragon Marauder reflexively screamed and attacked, but Mel easily repelled that attack using medium sized Blade.

Just with that the weapon of the man's Wyvern instantly froze, and even its armored arm became unable to move.

「Wha, ah!?!」

The man was shocked with the phenomenon that occurred to his body and he lost his cool. Mel told the man with extreme indifference.

「—Boring. Human is riddled all over with weak point compared to Abyss.」

She smashed the shoulder armor with the Halberd in her hand.

Due to the strong impact toward the Force Core, the Wyvern's function halted and it fell.

「Shit-!」

「This brat—don't get carried away.....!」

「As long as we understand the trick of your freezing ability, this fight belong to us!」

The remaining three men each yelled out and they launched simultaneous attack from three different directions.

Breath Gun's barrage, the bombardment of Cannon, mowing attack from Wire Tail.

But, every single one slipped through the figure of Mel and Ddraig Gwiber that should be hit.

「—Wh, aaat!?!」

A few seconds after they noticed that it was an illusion, Mel who circled to each of their back struck them down one after another before she called out to the last one.

「Are you, the division commander Drakkhen? Let me have a little fun, okay!」

The Halberd of Mel who bared an aggressive smile was barely blocked by a medium sized Blade.

A crack ran through the blade from that attack and the opponent was blown away greatly backward.

「Chih.....!」

The female mercenary Drag-Knight was losing the color of her face and without pause she flew in the attempt to escape.

But, a few seconds after she turned her back on the enemy. *Gakun!*, her Drag-Ride slanted and she became unable to put on speed at all.

「Wha-, what the hell is this! The Drag-Ride's control is, not working—!」

A sudden breakdown.

But, why did it happen this time of all thing!? The female mercenary was flustered.

「I'll tell you something for your souvenir to hell. This is Ddraig Gwiber's Divine Raiment, Dual Shift Natural Laws of Rivalry.」

Flame, ice, wind, illusion, furthermore even the output of Drag-Ride was sealed by this mysterious Divine Raiment.

The female mercenary was struck down without being able to grasp the answer until the very end. She was enveloped in flame blast.

「—Fuu.」

Mel who defeated the Dragon Marauder just as Bishop Orphel instructed let out a relieved sigh.

She was a girl who was widely acknowledged as genius, but with her still immature body, it was impossible to handle Divine Drag-Ride for prolonged time.

「Perhaps, my antagonism toward Krulcifer surfaced a bit too much.....」

After confirming the safety in the area, she landed down on that spot and dispelled her armor.

The Drag-Knights of Sanctuary Knight Order who were protecting the entrance of Hall immediately rushed the moment they saw Mel's figure,

They led her to a cabin at the side.

The Drag-Knights protecting the Ruin from invasion always had one of them constantly using Drake to watch out the surrounding.

Even if she would head to reinforce the attacked capital, she should at least took a little rest.

「Looks like everything goes well.」

Mel took a rest inside the small room while smiling proudly.

With this she was able to get obtain meritorious deeds from that guard duty too, and she should be able to protect Orphel's safety too.

「As expected, something like this is unnecessary for genius like me.」

Mel took off the holster of short sword attached on her waist. She then muttered that while staring at the blade.

The tip of the knife that was sheathed inside the cover was emitting slight beam of seven colors.

It was a blade that was loaded with the secret medicine of Ruin called Elixir.

By wounding a part of the body using that, the secret medicine would melt into the body, and it would awaken the latent ability that human possessed.

Before this Orphel handed it over to her and told her to use it in case she fell into danger.

(Just a bit more. It's just a bit more and I—can overcome the past at that day.)

Seven years ago, there was an attack due to the Abyss outbreak from the Ruin.

Due to that, she lost all her family members and fell into despair.

If it was now when she had become a Seven Dragon Paladins and obtained the strength that could defeat Abyss, she would be able to save the holy capital again.

And then—.

「Orphel.....I'm, fighting properly.」

She closed her eyes slowly and muttered with a voice that no one could hear.

That was Mel's thought toward Orphel that normally even she herself wasn't

aware of it.

—

Part 6

「—This place is, the archive of Hall?」

About that time, Lux and others who managed to infiltrate into Hall from the underground of the old sanctuary site finally arrived at their destination.

Lux spontaneously asked because it was a room that didn't bear the slightest resemblance with what he thought as archive.

Smooth silver wall was divided by countless lines, every single one was emitting faint light.

And then the surrounding bookshelves had countless small boxes placed on them.

「This is, are they the 『book』 put inside this archive?」

「Yes dearimasu. There is a little bit of trick to operate them but—, in any case they need to be put into deciphering device so—. More importantly dearimasu, is it all right to not go to the control room? I think it will be more convenient somehow with my memory recovered though?」

「Don't make me say the same thing repeatedly. This time just this is enough.」

Krulcifer ordered Ney to stop suggesting that.

In exchange, she gave her instruction to tell her the content of the 『book』 in the archive.

「Ro, roger dearimasu! Eerr, first is—」

Ney read up the variety of the book systematically.

From there, Krulcifer picked three kind of book that she wanted to get deciphered first.

『Drag-Ride's Fusion Function』, 『AvalonGreat Sacred Precincts and Sacred Eclipse』, and regarding 『XferKey's Supervisor』.

The first was a book that recorded about limited strengthening function hidden in Drag-Ride.

The second was about the way this world came to be.

The third was about Krulcifer herself.

「Roger dearimasu. Then, I will load as well as translate the ancient language dearimasu!」

Ney put the 『book』 on an object inside the archive, then frame and letter made from light emerged.

「.....」

Krulcifer was watching over that sight with a complicated look.

Was there anyone else like Krulcifer in this world, and what Xfer actually was.

That information which she didn't understand until now would become clear after this.

「The translation of the three volumes is finished dearimasu. It can be read anytime—」

「Then, let's go quickly to this viewing room. I'm worried about the situation at the surface and the holy capital.」

From what Alterize said, the fighting at old sanctuary site was going well for their side, but they didn't know what was going on.

At the present, after obtaining the translated 『books』 they didn't need to stay here for long.

「Roger dearimasu. Then right away—.....-!?」

Ney nodded and right after they finished teleporting to the viewing room—*DOoN!* the inside of the Ruin shook fiercely.

「This sound.....!? Don't tell me, there is abnormality in the Ruin—」

Lux raised a cautious voice and put his hand on the hilt of his Sword Device.

「No—dearimasu. This pattern, the old sanctuary site at the surface was attacked.」

Ney who told them that hurriedly sat on the chair and operated the viewing room.

Image of light emerged on the silver wall surface, projecting the sight of the old sanctuary site at the surface.

「This is—what, happened?」

There, they saw the figure of Pope Nias and others. They were already surrounded by ten-odd Abysses once more.

「They aren't appearing from the Ruin here. But, if the enemy still has combat force put nearby, then the reason they didn't move their full force right from the start is—?」

It was when Ney muttered like that, the swarm of Abyss performed strange cooperation and assaulted the force of Sanctuary Knight Order that was surprised and stunned —.

「—U, AAAAAA-.....!」

The stomach of Bishop Orphel who was at the side of Pope Nias, was pierced by a claw.

—

「Orphel! Get a hold of yourself!」

「Please escape, your eminence. Their aim, should be, yo.....」

Lump of blood leaked out *kopuh* from the mouth while she was talking.

Her internal organ was scraped off. It was clear that the wound was already fatal.

The flowing out blood was dying the surrounding snow crimson.

The force of Sanctuary Knight Order that was joyous of their victory and concerned about the holy capital until just now was struck down straight to hell because of the attack of swarm of Abyss once more.

The number and variety of the Abysses were mostly the same with the first wave, but the effect of the surprise attack while Sanctuary Knight Order was reorganizing their force was big.

There was a lot of knights who weren't wearing their Drag-Ride, the initiative was completely snatched from them.

Thus, the troops couldn't avoid falling apart.

Mel of the Seven Dragon Paladins wasn't there. The knight captain was protecting Pope Nias somehow, while Alterize was doing the same thing for Stiyl Einfeld and the eldest son Zain.

「What a blunder..... To be manipulated like this just by an assault that came with time difference!」

Alterize raised her voice while wielding twin swords using her EX Wyvern.

But, her swords had no momentum, perhaps because she was protecting her lord.

The eldest son Zain was also swinging his Wyvern's Blade while yelling in trepidation.

「A, a rampage! The same like that time, it's the punishment of breaking into the Ruin!」

「.....Zain! Don't speak that!」

The family Head Stiyl who was watching over the battle situation with grim expression until now spoke those words with sharp voice.

On the other hand, Alterize who heard about it for the first time made a bewildered expression.

「Rampage? Ymir's, Ruin is—?」

「Please send reinforcement! They got the bishop!」

The moment Alterize was taken aback and turned around with held breath, the sorrowful voice of a member of Sanctuary Knight Order could be heard.

Looking there, Bishop Orphel was lying down on the snow while being stained with blood.

—

「—You've done really well you know, Orphel, our former compatriot.」

- Zazaza-*, right after the discordant sound that was like sand storm came, a voice was sent into Orphel's ear.

The voice's owner was Drakkhen who should have been finished off by Mel some time ago.

This was a conversation that was carried out between the two who were conspiring with each other throughout this past one year.

It was a message that was sent by the Divine Raiment of Divine Drag-Ride Asp that Drakkhen possessed.

「Who Mel Defeated, was your body double.....a decoy, was it? Since when you noticed? That I'm trying, to betray you—」

Orphel asked mumblingly, without a single twitch on her body and with vacant eyes.

Drakkhen who heard her smiled wryly in exasperation.

「I've got not the slightest duty to explain it you. But, well, if I've got to tell you the trick, I knew right from the start, that you betrayed me.」

「.....」

「I'll tell you as souvenir for your journey to hell. The trick to deceive someone isn't to make yourself not seem suspicious as much as possible. It's to ascertain what your opponent is believing. Is it the words from the people they trust, or is it the teaching of the authority they are clinging on, well there are various things but—for all people, it's hard to doubt the information that they investigated themselves.」

「Did you, notice, that I made my subordinates, to observe, you.....?」

「No. I noticed that at another time.」

「.....?」

- Zazazaza-*, the unique jarring sound reached Orphel's ear once more.

「This discordant sound you can hear when I sent sound to you using Asp. In a situation where this sound hasn't come to hearing first, I won't be able to listen

to your voice, and you also won't be able to listen to my voice—. In the first place you having that kind of impression is my trap.」

「Kuh.....!」

Orphel bit her lips hearing that.

She got her.

Asp's Divine Raiment—the ability to send sound to a designated place, or picking up sound from that place.

The jarring sound like a sandstorm that she would surely hear before that ability was activated was a trap that Drakkhen set up.

That jarring sound originally wasn't necessary in the activation of the Divine Raiment. It was a bluff in order to make Orphel suspect that Drakkhen wouldn't be able to eavesdrop using her Divine Raiment without that jarring sound coming first.

In other words Orphel's plan was regularly overheard using that Divine Raiment that was picking up her sound from far away.

And the result of that was this.

「Besides, you want to make her obtain achievement right? That Subjugator girl.」

「.....What are, you talking about?」

「I'm talking about Mel Gizalut. She is—actually your daughter right?」

「tsu.....!?!」

Orphel's breathing was already feeble, but she raised a small groan on that spot.

「Ho, w....., did you—」

「Oh, I hit the mark? Well, this is just a hunch though. I thought of it while observing you. Why is a bishop who originally wasn't connected with Gizalut house is supporting an orphan girl until that far.....well, it's not that rare of a story though. Even if Gizalut house that is a noted family of knight is acquainted with someone from church and a child resulted, it's not strange at all. Of

course, it's something one cannot go public with, so Mel was adopted to Gizalut house but—」

Gizalut house itself was completely eradicated, and Mel became alone.

By all rights she wanted to introduce herself as her mother, but she was unable to do that with her position.

「What are, you, planning.....with that child?」

「Rest assured. I'm preparing the greatest big moment for your daughter. The erasure of the traitors who are trying to destroy this country. I'll have her become the trump card in order for us, Dragon Marauder to obtain the Ruin.」

「.....Me.....!」

Not even voice could come out from Orphel's throat anymore.

At that moment where her consciousness was fading, an armored arm lifted up her body.

「Orphel! Get a hold of yourself-!」

Already unable to move, she mustered her last remaining strength, and she was finally able to open her eyes.

The one who was there was her daughter who she was unable to tell the truth—Mel Gizalut.

—

—Why.

Why why why why why why why.

That word was continuing to go around in circles fruitlessly inside Mel's head.

Even though she should have done everything well, even though she should have become strong.

That time seven years ago, the rampage of Ruin—.

Different from that time when the holy capital and Gizalut house was destroyed, she wasn't powerless anymore. That should be so, and yet.

Even though she also shouldn't have any feeling of like to Orphel.

Why—did her sight was blurred with tears she wondered.

「Me, I.....」

The lips of the woman who lost her face's complexion opened, and a voice could be heard.

「.....There is, something that I have, to tell you—」

「Orphel-!」

The moment she heard her last words, warm tears spilled out from the girl's eyes that still had childishness remaining in it.

—

Part 7

At the north of holy capital. A battle began against the army of Abyss that appeared in the battlefield in front of the cathedral.

The noble believers who came to offer prayer evacuated in panic to inside.

The outside was surrounded by the defense force and a barrier was laid out to protect the outer wall along.

At present, the variety of Abyss that could be seen was only Abyss that could fly like Gargoyle, Chimera, and so on.

Thus, excluding Philuffy and Yoruka, only Drag-Knights handling flying type Wyvern headed out to intercept.

The enemy was a mix of around three types of Abyss, they numbered around thirty in total.

What was troublesome was the existence of around three powerful Abysses called Diabolos among them.

No matter even if it was a user of Divine Drag-Ride, taking on that number simultaneously would be harsh, there the experience and skill of the girls who had continued fighting until now won out.

「Divine Gate.」

Celis wearing Lindwurm entered the range of the Abyss at the sky instantly using the Divine Raiment of instant movement.

Without delay, she unleashed a thrust of Lightning Lance and easily pierced the core of a Gargoyle.

That splendid performance caused the noble believers inside the cathedral to leak out cheer and stir.

It even triggered Lisha who saw that to smile.

「She is powerful as usual but—I too cannot lose!」

She pulled out the Sword Device of Tiamat that she was wearing and sent in the thought of mind control operation into it.

At the same time, the supplemental armament of throwing weapon, Legion appeared in countless number, they were fired simultaneously aiming at Abyss.

「GUaaAAH!」

The Abyss of mixed animals—Chimera was hit hard by the countless throwing weapons.

The moment the enemy showed opening when it tried to dodge, a huge flash from the main cannon Seven Heads struck it into pieces.

The Drag-Knights of the theocracy who were carrying out covering fire became even more roused up seeing that offense.

Celis was charging into the swarm of Abyss alone and annihilated Gargoyle one after another.

By all rights it was a situation where she was surrounded by Abyss, but due to the instant movement ability of Divine Gate, it was as though it posed no problem at all.

Lisha controlled Legions freely and not just attacking, she even carried out disturbance action to enemy's rank.

Thanks to that, the covering fire of the theocracy's Wyvern user and the Cannon bombardment from the ground force had easier time to connect.

But, as expected the enemy was also preparing the stance of counterattack.

One Diabolos that should be at far in the rear of the enemy swarm came flying with speed that eye couldn't follow.

「GURURURURUooOOOOAAAH!」

The jet black powerful arm that was three times larger than Gargoyle was swung down, assaulting a Drag-Knight of the theocracy wearing Wyvern violently.

「UWAAAAH!?!」

A barrier was automatically laid out, but it was broken through forcefully.

The moment the young Drag-Knight of the Sanctuary Knight Order screamed, Diabolos's figure was reeled in at high speed to below.

「Pile Anchor.」

The land battle type Divine Drag-Ride Typhoon that Philuffy was wearing.

The wire weapon that was fired out from every part of that armor caught Diabolos that stopped moving just for a moment, and pulled it toward the ground in front of the cathedral where she was.

「—Wait, be careful airhead girl!? That thing can spew fire and also self-detonate! The cathedral will get swallowed!」

「There is distance so no problem. Take care, of the other two.」

Philuffy unleashed a spinning kick at the Diabolos she reeled in and she brought the battle into a one-on-one duel with the enemy still restrained by Pile Anchor.

Celis who saw that also approached the remaining Diabolos using Divine Gate and succeeded in pinning it down.

「Wai-, I'm the commander of you guys, so even though I told you not to move carelessly—」

Based on her status, Lisha received the role as the commander. But now she was flustered and already about to regret it.

『Oi, listen ero woman! You do something about the last Diabolos—』

Unable to see the figure of Yoruka, Lisha called out using Dragon Voice, it was at that timing her face's complexion changed.

At the same time, a Dragon Voice from unfamiliar Drag-Knight was sent toward her.

『Yaa, aren't you all putting a good fight here, everyone from the new kingdom.』

『You are—don't tell me』

『Perhaps I should say, nice to meet you for the first time. I'm the one called

one of the three bosses of Dragon Marauder, the Human Dragon division commander Drakkhen.』

Lisha made a dubious face that the mastermind of the case this time suddenly sent out Dragon Voice to her.

But, without even any time to ponder about the enemy's intention, Drakkhen told her.

『Well, that's enough for the greeting but, did you notice I wonder? While your attention was pulled to the sky, I sent out new type of Abyss to the place of you guys see.』

『What.....?』

When Lisha lowered her gaze to the townscape of the holy capital, she saw some black objects were approaching while hiding at the cover of the buildings.

A lump of liquid—it seemed to be slime type Abyss.

But, it was different from the type that Lisha had seen until now, worthy of the name of 『new type』.

Its size wasn't something huge, a single one had the volume of about an adult male.

『Number is an ironclad rule in battle, but it's a maxim that is a bit insufficient to defeat you all who can overturn that. —Then, I'll teach you all, the tactic to crush that conceit that is drunk on strength and underestimate the enemy.』

「Hah, you said that you are going to expressly teach me—don't look down on us!」

Lisha swung her Sword Device and controlled Legion—but, the moment it hit the black slime, she felt something out of place.

「—? This is!?!」

When the Legion that hit the slime returned to her, the black slime that she thought was crushed was clinging on it like glue.

When she tried to wipe it away using Tiamat's armored arm, it also got stuck further on that hand.

「It's not melting the armor.....does it not has offensive power? Then—」

It was fine like this, the movement would become somewhat dull, but it could continue battle without any trouble.

Lisha thought that and flew away the Legion. In that moment, its movement deviated and fell to the ground.

「—!? No, this slime's true identity, it's something that weaken Drag-Ride!」

The output of Legion itself, and furthermore her control using Sword Device were dulling.

Most likely the slime didn't only have stickiness, but also the property to obstruct the command signal from the Drag-Ride's main body.

『Hee, aren't your instinct sharp? Looks like it's true that your talent as Drag-Ride developer is also first class..... That thing's name is Chaff Slime.』

『Fuh, your luck has run out now that I found out. This new type Abyss won't come off once you touch them and it will weaken Drag-Ride, but accordingly it also don't have offensive power. If we dealt with it without touching then—』

『Say, your highness of new kingdom. Do you think that I'll execute that kind of shallow tactic?』

『—What do you mean?』

『Farther north of the cathedral, there is a large hill right? If that snow turn into avalanche, don't you think it will be disaster?』

『—You bastard, don't tell me!?!』

Lisha instantly guessed it and turned around while cutting off the Dragon Voice communication.

「Everyone! Evacuate the people from the cathedral! An avalanche is—」

The Divine Raiment of Drakkhen's Divine Drag-Ride Asp was the power to freely control sound.

And then, sound was the vibration of air.

Right after Drakkhen struck the surface at the top of the hill with maximum oscillation wave—, the surface of white surge swallowed the troop formation at

the cathedral.

A part of the cathedral collapsed, and all the Drag-Knights of Sanctuary Knight Order who were protecting the area were also buried.

No—, snow was also entering inside the collapsed cathedral.

With this, a lot of nobles of the theocracy were buried alive.

For a moment, Lisha's head was about to become pure white just like the sight before her, but she immediately calmed her breathing and took command.

『—Can anyone hear!? Informing all Drag-Knights who can move! We will rescue the people and the comrades who were swallowed by the snow. Everyone who can move is to search inside the snow in the cathedral! Make use of Drake's Radar too!』

Right after she announced that, the members of Sanctuary Knight Order who were dumbfounded started moving.

When they threw their body into the snow in order to rescue the people, the troops noticed something strange.

「-....., wha, what's this!? A strange Abyss is hiding inside the snow—」

「Over here too!? Where are they hiding!? It's clinging on me.....I can't defeat it!」

「—This is, just now」

The complexion of Lisha who saw that changed.

That new type Abyss that Legion touched just now.

It didn't have offensive power, but that Chaff Slime that could lower the function of Drag-Ride was buried in large amount inside the snow.

『A message! The Drake standing watch at the outskirts of the capital reported, that about fifty Drag-Knights of Dragon Marauder are heading here—』

「So, it's like that.....!」

Lisha who noticed Drakkhen's scheme spontaneously gritted her teeth.

The rescue of the nobles who were buried alive wouldn't make it in time without using Drag-Knight.

But, the Chaff Slimes inserted into the snow would encroach into their armor each time they entered the snow, by the time the enemy's main force arrived, their side's combat force would be drastically lowered.

『It's great that you understand my aim, if you want to be able to fight my force satisfactorily, then you can forsake those people, the noble believers gathering there without reservation.』

「.....Kuh!」

Drakkhen's voice sounded mocking.

But, she also couldn't keep hesitating to make judgment like this.

Inside that snow, there were also Krulcifer's two little sisters.

『Informing everyone once more! The Abysses inside the snow has no offensive ability! Mobilize with rescue as your priority! We will intercept the coming Dragon Marauder right after finishing the rescue! Hurry!』

『.....Acknowledged-!』

「I will help, Lizsharte.」

「I also, can do it.」

Right after Lisha's announcement, Celis and Philuffy who had defeated Diabolos also headed toward her. There should be one more Diabolos remaining, but—]

「I have defeated it already a long time ago.」

When they noticed, Yoruka was standing on the nearby outer wall smilingly. Diabolos's head fell from the arm of Yato no Kami and rolled on the ground.

She didn't have any spirit of cooperation at all like usual, but the height of her battle strength was at abnormal level.

「That is to say, with this I have fulfilled my duty to you.」

「Wait! If you still have strength to spare then cooperate with us! There are people being buried alive here right now! It's our job to rescue them!」

Lisha was actually moving her hands even while talking.

Her hands dug into thick snow to rescue the people, and then the Chaff Slime mixed inside the snow encroached into her armor.

But, Yoruka didn't move from the cathedral balcony where she was standing. She shook her head left and right with a smile.

「I will decline. If I touch that strange Abyss, I will be unable to move properly. Like that I won't be able to finish off the enemy of Aruji-sama that will arrive after this.」

「-.....!? You bastard! Are you serious!?!」

「Lizsharte, it's meaningless trying to persuade her. Let's hurry even if it's just with us.」

Celis prompted like that, but Lisha didn't give up and spoke up to Yoruka.

「I know that you are that kind of person. However, what will Lux want if he is here, don't you have the courage to even try thinking that?」

「What does that mean?」

Yoruka tilted her head. Lisha continued while still rescuing people.

「I'm saying, are you scared to make decision by yourself? You don't think about your master's wish, you only follow your own rule no matter what, don't you wish to become even better servant for Lux?」

「—How can you judge that it's like that?」

「That's obvious. Because I who have that guy as my subordinate is happy. That guy is always trying to answer my feeling. That's why I also want to respond back to that!」

Lisha declared powerfully and put even more strength to control Tiamat.

Chaff Slime was gradually clinging on her strongly and her movement dulled, even so her hand didn't slow down.

「If you say that you are a tool that doesn't wish for anything, then I'll teach you! Help us Yoruka! In order to save everyone in this country, share your strength with us!」

「....., it's unfortunate but there is no more time for that. —They are coming.」

「tsu.....」

Yoruka stared at Lisha with a serious face for a short itme, but suddenly her lips loosened.

Ahead of where Yoruka's gaze was turned, the force of Dragon Maruder could be seen marching from the north hill.

—

Part 8

A few minutes after danger was approaching both the old sanctuary site and the holy capital simultaneously.

By controlling the viewing room by Ney's hand, Lux and Krulcifer who were wearing their respective Drag-Ride were teleported to the old sanctuary site that was right above the Hall.

They left the control of Ruin to Ney and headed out using the shortest route to rescue Pope Nias and others, but—.

「.....What is, happening?」

Krulcifer who was usually composed muttered that with trembling lips.

At the snow field of old sanctuary ground that they had entrusted to Mel and others, the area was filled with broken armor and traces of blood.

With the time difference, the force of Sanctuary Knight Order had collapsed due to the surprise attack of the ten-odd Abysses that were thrown into this place once more.

「Kuh, uu.....」

Perhaps because of the strenuous effort of the knight captain and Alterize, Pope Nias himself was still safe, but the battle situation was obviously unfavorable.

「It's, terrible.....! Even at the capital, a violent avalanche occurred from the mountain region at the northeast area—in addition there is even Abyss's attack, at this rate we won't even be able to rescue them!」

One member of Sanctuary Knight Order wearing Drake yelled that with an exhausted face.

Even the situation at the holy capital was exceedingly grim.

If they didn't clean up the remaining Abyss and hurriedly rushed to the capital, Lisha and others would be in danger.

Lux who was wearing Wyvern made that judgment and put his hand on his other Sword Device.

The exhaustion from using Bahamut was intense, but there was no more leeway to hold back.

「Krulcifer-san! Let's exterminate the remaining Abyss! We have to hurry back to the capital!」

「Yes, I understand—.....-!?!」

Krulcifer responded to Lux's voice. At that timing, it appeared right before her eyes.

—

「—Unforgivable.」

—

「Eh.....」

The one hovering before the two was a single Drag-Knight.

It was Mel Gizalut wearing Ddraig Gwiber, but her condition was very strange.

Her eye glint that was usually filled with innocence or fearless smile was now sinking darkly, emitting a disquieting aura.

「Unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable unforgivable....., —unforgivable-!」

Mel Gizalut's eye snapped open. She drove her Drag-Ride and swooped down.

The Halberd attack that was unleashed with explosive momentum assaulted the Fafnir of the dumbfounded Krulcifer.

「Krulcifer-san-.....!?!」

Against the very unexpected attack of Mel, even Lux tried to stop it but he didn't make it in time.

But, when the attack was blocked by Fafnir's special armament, Auto Shield, Krulcifer called out to Mel in front of her with a bewildered look.

「What are you intending? Why so suddenly—!？」

「.....You are, still planning to play dumb?It's fine, if you are going to feign innocence until the very end」

Mel floated a venomous smile and whispered.

She backed away and took distance for a moment, then she swung down her Halberd on Fafnir once more.

「-.....! It can't be helped then.」

Krulcifer too, she dodged this time and sniped at Mel using the freezing bullet from Freezing Cannon.

Although Mel immediately defended using Halberd, her weapon along with her armored arm were frozen.

Fafnir's special armament that froze the spot that was hit couldn't be blocked using normal barrier or weapon.

The moment the two were relieved that Mel's attack was stopped for the moment, the armor of Ddraig Gwiber that was frozen dripped down water and the ice was instantly melted.

「Wha—!？」

Krulcifer who saw that was shaken. It was then Mel swung down her Halberd once more.

Lux immediately blocked it using his Blade as shield, but the blade was frozen instantly.

「Ku.....!」

Having no time to aim for a counter using Critical Hit became a failure for him.

Lux's movement was sealed by the same attack and phenomenon like Krulcifer's special armament.

(This freezing, is it because of special armament? But—how!?)

If it was an armament with the same freezing ability like Freezing Cannon, the reason how the Halberd's freezing could be melted would still be unclear.

Or else, was this the ability of Ddraig Gwiber's Divine Raiment?

「—Wise Blood!」

Krulcifer who considered Mel as formidable enemy activated the future prediction ability of Fafnir's Divine Raiment.

But, right after the light of Divine Raiment enveloped the Drag-Ride, Mel took a nosedive and escaped toward the snow field's forest.

「Ddraig Gwibel, Wyrn Mode.」

The moment she landed on the ground, Ddraig Wyvern quickly transformed into land battle form.

The wings were folded and wheels for sliding popped out from the armored legs.

At the same time with her landing, she vanished among the trees in high speed without even the slightest time difference.

「Not bad.....!」

Fafnir's Wise Blood could predict enemy's movement, but if the opponent exclusively escaped, the attack option for this side would be remarkably narrowed.

Even if she tried to snipe, the forest that was covered with snow became wall that rapidly decreased the chance to hit Mel who was moving in high speed.

Surely Mel's plan was to aim at the moment the effect of future prediction ran out before attacking once more.

Thus, Krulcifer called off her Divine Raiment and took a stance to prepare against Mel's assault but—.

「.....!？」

Something strange, Mel's killing intent until just now was overflowing fiercely, but would she come attacking her simply with the same move?

The moment Lux probed at Mel's movement with a dubious gaze, he

suddenly noticed that the air throughout the area was flickering like haze.

The shoulder part of Ddraig Gwiber that was running through between trees in high speed had pipe like small chimney lengthening from them.

「Defense! Krulcifer-san! An attack is coming!」

「—!?」

The moment Krulcifer heard Lux's voice, a shudder ran through her body.

『.....Aerial BusterDragon Breath Scorching Heat』

Right after Mel's muttering sounded out from Dragon Voice, the atmosphere shook and the air itself exploded.

「Kuh, aAAAAH—!」

「UA, AAAaaAAH!」

Flame and shockwave, those forces that originally would come from one direction now felt like they were coming from all direction.

Impact and thunderous roar, flash was burning the retina, flame blast rolled up, making it impossible to even breath, and the Drag-Ride was creaking.

「That child, doing such thing—!」

Krulcifer desperately rallied her Drag-Ride and somehow managed to hold out in midair.

As expected, even Auto Shield couldn't completely defend against wide range bombardment from all direction.

Mel was pretending to escape by skating on the ground while scattering out flammable fuel that was turned into vapor.

If it was ignited, the enemy in the midair area would be burned off and made it possible to shot them down.

What she muttered, Aerial Buster, it must be a special armament for use of intercepting flying enemy.

Mel had predicted that Krulcifer would stop using Wise Blood if she took distance.

(Strong! To be able to use Divine Drag-Ride this far at this age, on top of that she is able to form strategy and execute it.)

Even Lux who was using Bahamut when he was twelve was astonished at Mel Gizalut's true strength.

The two were tasting the terror when she was turned into enemy at the bottom of their heart.

「To be able to have time to feel surprise, you are really composed aren't you?」

「-.....!?」

Ddraig Gwiber and Mel's figure appeared from the smoke of the flame blast that enshrouded the area.

Krulcifer reflexively fired Freezing Cannon, but that flash cut through empty air.

「—This is, illusion!?」

Even though the bullet wasn't evaded, it slipped through Mel's armor and body and didn't hit.

Mel leaped out before Krulcifer using that opening and her Halberm struck from overhead.

- GAKII-!*, Auto Shield reacted and seven shields blocked the attack.

Krulcifer readied her Rifle at that opening, but a violent squall mowed down.

「It's wind this time!? What in the world—!?」

「Troublesome special armament....., I'll make it so you cannot use it anymore.」

The Drag-Ride of Mel who muttered ruthlessly was emitting mysterious orange light.

The activation of Ddraig Gwiber's Divine Raiment that they had been witnessing several times since some time ago.

Lux put up his guard, readied the Scale Blade that was distorted from the

flame blast just now, and prepared Critical Hit.

Krulcifer activated her Divine Raiment the Wise Blood and predicted Mel's movement.

「—How astonishing. To still think that such move will still work even at this point of time.」

Mel spoke with callous and chilly tone.

Right after that, an abnormality occurred to the Drag-Rides of Lux and Krulcifer who were near Mel while Mel herself wasn't doing anything.

「-....., this is, what is going on!?!」

「The Drag-Ride's output is decreasing!? Why, so suddenly—」

The two desperately controlled their Drag-Ride to rally their posture right away, but the Drag-Ride's reaction itself was bad.

The Drag-Ride's performance itself and its control function were being weakened.

No matter how excellent of a Drag-Knight they were, there would be nothing they could do if their command wasn't transmitted properly.

「Could it be, this is—」

「Yes, with this, that annoying shield of yours become unusable too. —Bye.」

With one attack Mel sent flying the Auto Shield that had become slow in reacting, and then she reversed her hand and swung the Halberd horizontally.

It attacked at Krulcifer and Fafnir who exposed a defenseless opening.

—But, Lux moved his Wyvern that was dropping in output and became unable to move properly, and he barely stopped the attack.

「Stop this Mel! I don't know what happened but, this isn't the time to fight between ourselves! Everyone else is—, even in the capital the people are being attacked by enemy!」

Lux understood that Mel was attacking without holding anything back, even so Lux tried to persuade her.

Certainly Mel was placed in a special environment, but she wasn't a bad girl by any means.

And yet, why was she directing hostility to Krulcifer?

When Lux questioned that once again, Mel turned a gaze that was filled with hatred toward Lux.

「You are planning to cover for her even knowing the truth? That woman who come from the bloodline of the Ruin and is the source of calamity—」

「Eh.....!？」

When Lux was shaken hearing Mel's words, his Blade was frozen once more.

The moment he let go of the weapon to prevent the freezing encroaching into his Drag-Ride, Mel's Halberd was swung down.

「U, aah.....!」

Receiving a severe attack through the barrier, Lux was knocked down to the snow field below.

But, right after that, the frame of Mel's Ddraig Gwiber was starting to rattle to left and right.

The control disorder because of the user's limit—the omen of rampage was appearing.

「Kuuh.....!」

Mel's Ddraig Gwiber descended and its armor was dispelled.

This was the inescapable weak point that was shared between Drag-Knight who was still a child.

No matter how high their Drag-Ride aptitude and battle sense were, it was impossible to operate Drag-Ride in full power for a long time with a body that was still young and immature.

Thus, Krulcifer threw a question to Mel who was standing still while breathing roughly.

「What do you mean? How, do you know that—!？」

「.....It's the last words of Orphel. I heard it just now. Because of your fault, a rampage occurred in the Ruin of this country at the past. She said that she wanted me to defeat you the main culprit and take revenge, even at the cost of my life—」

「—Eh?」

- Jiri-*, a burning heat shrouded inside Krulcifer's head.

Her own memories that she almost forgotten.

The first one, she was led by a lot of people toward the Ruin, and she could see a lot of Abyss from nearby.

And then the second time she was led by church's people, and when she was guided to the underground of the old sanctuary site, an earthquake and collapse occurred.

She was buried inside rubbles, and when she opened her eyes at the church, her father wasn't there.

There should be someone who saved her, but she remembered that until the very end her family didn't come for her.

Since then she became estranged from her father, and the gulf with her family deepened—.

「Then, the incident seven years ago, and one and a half year ago—all of them happened because I was involved with Ruin?」

「The church that wanted to control the Ruin by using you concealed your true identity and the truth about the cause of the rampage. You also knew right? No, even if you actually didn't know—I don't care.」

While Mel was staggering because she was at the limit of her stamina.

Mel pulled out the knife that was tied on her waist, and stabbed the tip of that blade that was shining in seven colors into her own chest.

「Mel! That's—!?!」

The treasure of devil transformation that Lux saw in the Ruin of Wanheim Principality.

Black pattern muddily spread from the stabbed tip, and Mel's body was tinged with light.

「—tsu, AAAAaaAaAAAAAAAAAaaAH.....!」

An anguished soundless yell echoed on the snow field.

「Mel! Stop it!」

When Lux rushed forward while still wearing Wyvern, Mel's limbs jerked like a doll and she swung her Sword Device horizontally once more.

There was no more shaking from exhaustion on her body.

But that eye glint was enveloped with jet black color, and black pattern was oozing from under the pilot suit.

「I don't need something like a tomorrow without Orphel in it anymore. The honor of Seven Dragon Paladins, and the achievement of meritorious deeds as a knight too, I don't need them. The thing that I really wanted, what I had to protect no matter what—everything was taken away. They were all gone.」

Mel's despairing voice was stringed on while the curse of Elixir was encroaching inside.

「—That's why, I'll bring ruin. Swearing on the name of Subjugator that eradicate the enemy of human, I'll destroy everything of yours who stole everything from me without leaving behind a single thing-!」

Mel bared two eyes that were dyed with rage and lifted her Sword Device to the sky.

「A pair of stains opposing each other, be clad in my body and resurrect. O dragon of dispute ruining heaven and earth, Ddraig Gwiber!」

Along with the passcode, the Divine Drag-Ride of red and white was summoned once more in front of Mel.

The frame quickly unfolded and transformed into the girl's armor. Mel directed that eye glint that was like evil spirit toward Lux and Krulcifer.

「Devil transformation just like Dilwy.....!? No, it's only still a part of her that is changed.」

Perhaps the amount of Elixir that was filled into the blade was only very slightly, because the transformation didn't reach her whole body. The eerie black pattern only emerged on a part of her skin.

Then, there was still a chance to save her.

「Mel! That power is dangerous! If you continue using it, your body will—」

「So what? Do you two have the strength where you can worry about my body?」

Mel made a gruesome smile and she silently readied her Halberd.

The trace of the innocent girl didn't remain anymore there.

Utter rage and overflowing boiling hatred.

Mel whose negative emotion was amplified by Elixir's side effect glared at the surrounding where Abyss was rampaging.

「Unforgivable. Whether it's you who is the cause of calamity, and also the church that was hiding the reason of my family's death. I will end everything—right here-!」

The moment Mel yelled, she strongly gripped the control stick of her Drag-Ride.

Right after that, the wheels on the leg armor rotated with initial response that was incomparable from before and it charged forward in a straight line.

「Krulcifer-san! Be careful-!」

「.....Why? That Ruin's rampage, was actually, my fault—」

Krulcifer immediately controlled Fafnir and tried to escape to behind Mel, but there was no sharpness in her movement.

Mel didn't let go of that moment of hesitation.

From DrivePropulsion Device that was creeping on the ground with super acceleration, it switched to Wyvern Mode that skated in the sky.

Against the attack of full power that was backed by the Drag-Ride's weight and terrific momentum, Auto Shield that was currently had its output lowered didn't move.

「—Disappear」

Mel Gizalut who was transformed into a demon brandished her weapon and leaped.

In that slight instant with death right before her, something cut in before Krulcifer's gaze.

—

Part 9

「.....Shit-! I expected it but, to be unable to move by this much!」

Lisha muttered in irritation while galring at the countless Abyss dancing in the sky.

The Sanctuary Knight Order protecting the holy capital as well as Lisha and co the members from new kingdom were forced into a hard battle that surpassed their expectation.

They made it in time with the rescue of the believers who were swallowed by the avalanche that Drakkhen caused, but the sticky new type Abyss—Chaff Slime was mixed in large amount inside that snow.

They clung at the armor's joint parts and propulsion device, lowering each part's movement and performance drastically.

This was the result from prioritizing the rescue of the people even knowing that it was Drakkhen's trap, but she didn't regret it.

But, the time to truly pay the compensation for it would be from here on.

「GISHAAAaAAH.....!」

A Chimera gliding in the air to attack was intercepted by the Lightning Lance of Celis who was wearing Lindwurm.

The attack from the lance that was tinged with powerful electricity burned the winged beast Abyss—but, that attack which originally should be able to pierce the core in a single attack and finished it off ended with only stabbing the enemy's muscle chest slightly.

「GISHAAAAAAAAAAAA!」

Naturally, the efficiency of evasion and defense against the counterattack of that Abyss that couldn't be defeated was also limited.

Celis immediately used her lance as shield and dodged the claw, but she was unable to neutralize the impact completely and it pierced her armor, running through her body.

In the case that the offensive aspect was weakened, the stamina of the user was shaved off more than the Drag-Ride's performance.

The majority of Drag-Knights of the theocracy who got showered with Chaff Slime had their armor dispelled due to exhaustion and the encroachment, the number of people who could fight was decreasing in accelerated speed.

Even Celis who was several times more trained than ordinary people was breathing hard, that was why Lisha and Philuffy were already at the state of maintaining their armor with only their willpower.

It was only Yoruka whose figure couldn't be found anywhere right after she didn't comply with Lisha's demand.

「That damned ero woman, just what is she thinking.....!？」

Was she heading alone to old sanctuary site to protect Lux, or was she going to defeat the commander of the enemy, Drakkhen? It was unclear what she was doing, but at present they could expect nothing from her.

「Lizsharte. Do you still have spare strength to exert your full power?」

Celis asked Lisha like that while staring at her with a grave expression before her eyes.

It seemed that the Abyss was finally completely annihilated, but they were replaced by the Drag-Knights of Dragon Marauder who were gradually tightening the encirclement.

The enemy's Wyvern force that numbered more than ten was lining up in the sky above at long distance. They were readying their Cannon and began simultaneous bombardment toward the cathedral.

「Shit-! The really are easy to understand bunches!」

Lisha spontaneously clicked her tongue. Philuffy beside her also nodded and replied.

「My Anchor too, cannot reach in that range.」

The tactic of the Dragon Marauder was thorough.

They wouldn't enter the range of the throwing weapon Legion possessed by Lisha's Tiamat or the wire weapon Pile Anchor that Philuffy's Typhoon handled no matter what.

The strength of the Cannon would be dampened if they fired from too far, but it seemed even that had been taken into consideration.

「—But, they also shouldn't be able to approach carelessly. It's as though the enemies other than Wyvern cannot be seen at all.」

Celis glared sharply to the front amidst the Cannon attack that was fired continuously.

Even if they covered for the nobles gathered inside the cathedral, it would be a losing battle due to the Chaff Slime sticking on them making their energy consumption even more intense.

Thus, they were aiming the instant Lisha and others became impatient and came forward. Even Lisha and others had guessed enemy's intention.

If they flew carelessly, most likely they would receive concentrated fire from Drakes hiding on the ground waiting for chance.

The Wyrms would also charging forward at the same time launching an attack.

The current Lisha and co couldn't breakthrough this encirclement.

Inside the half-destroyed cathedral, a lot of wounded and scared noble believers were clamoring.

They had no time for hesitation.

If the encirclement by enemy force was completed, they would be annihilated by all out bombardment.

「—Lizsharte, I'll leave the command to you. I will go to buy time.」

Celis suddenly told Lisha that and stepped forward.

「Wa, wait! Don't make rushed decision! Perhaps there is still another way!」

Even while saying that, she gritted her teeth from being unable to think a

valid idea.

In the end, was it just as Yoruka said, that they should abandon this country's people and fought?

She didn't want to think that her judgment that she made as the princess of the new kingdom doing the best that she could do was mistaken.

But, she didn't want to have someone else to shoulder the burden that resulted from her judgment.

When Lisha was casting her eyes down unable to say anything, Celis silently turned her face to her and showed a smile.

「It's not like I'm planning to die, so worrying is not permitted. Also—those caustic words you told to Yoruka just now were splendid. They were words worthy of the princess of the new kingdom.」

「-.....!?!」

Lisha held her breath, right after that Celis's Lindwurm soared to the sky.

「As expected, it's heavy.」

It wasn't just the movement restriction from the liquid Abyss made from mineral matter—the Chaff Slime, the additional weight was also weighing her down.

Celis gave up shaking off the slime with force. She could only finish off the enemy using the minimum movement.

「Here she come—fire-!」

Just like they predicted, the force of Wyrms and Drakes at the ground hiding in the cover of building around the cathedral was showering her with concentrated Cannon fire.

「.....Divine Gate.」

Celis activated the Divine Raiment of Lindwurm in anticipation of that.

She was able to instantly teleport within the territory of light.

Chaff Slime was clinging on her, but she was still barely able to fly along with it.

But, when she was evading, the other ground force immediately repeated two, three shots of Cannon.

「So I still cannot reach with this.....」

Although the encirclement was tightened, there was no enemy within the range that Lindwurm's attack could reach just by teleporting once.

There was a need to remake the territory of light to fly until that range using Divine Gate, but as expected the enemy wouldn't let her by concentrating their aim at her.

It was a torrent of shockwave that even reached dozens. Even so the girl didn't waver and flew. The men in the enemy force shuddered witnessing that.

「Chih! This woman, is she really the same Drag-Knight like us!? She should be weakened already!」

Celis suppress the number of bullet hitting her to the minimum, and finally she broke through the storm of concentrated fire.

And then, the tip of the lance she thrust pierced the armor of Dragon Marauder's Wyvern in the sky.

Finally, the first enemy Drag-Knight was destroyed.

But, the Wyverns at the surrounding who saw that switched their armament into Breath Gun for close range and aimed to stop her movement with barrage of bullets.

「It's imprudent but, how splendid. As expected from the legendary mercenary.」

She even felt admiration to the thoroughness of the enemy force's tactic and the height of their proficiency.

She had polished her strength, but this was a feat that she who was unable to lead other people couldn't possibly do.

Because rather than forcing hardship or burden to other people, it was easier for her to take them upon herself.

But—,

「It's something I want to attempt to challenge if I come back alive. I want to give proper guidance to my juniors for sure this time, that's why—」

Celis smiled. She disturbed the encirclement of Wyverns and carried out suicidal attack until she ran out of strength.

「—I'll also go soon, please take care of the rest, princess.」

A few seconds after Celis started charging toward the Dragon Marauder, Philuffy too told Lisha with an indifferent tone.

「Even you, what are you thinking airhead girl! What are you going to do running ahead when your Drag-Ride isn't flying type! There is no enemy in the firing range of your Typhoon—you'll only get surrounded and then shot down!」

With the ground where it was hard to move because of the avalanche and the movement that dulled due to Chaff Slime, she was just a shooting target.

Thus Lisha tried to stop her in panic, but Philuffy quietly shook her head.

「It's not that, perhaps. Something is coming.」

「.....What are you saying!?!」

「Something else than this slime.....something is strange, it has been gathering since just now.」

Philuffy turned her gaze forward with a glance.

Then, another slime with different color than Chaff Slime that had muddy black color—a slime with dull ocher color was moving.

「Another slime Abyss huh? But, if it's just that I'll deal with it right—」

「Don't shoot.My nose can smell it, even from here, oil smell.」

「Smell, you say.....? Don't tell me—」

Philuffy nodded expressionlessly.

Different from the Wyvern force, she thought it was strange that the Dragon Marauders on the ground didn't come rushing, but looking carefully it was the reverse.

The Wyrms force on the ground that was approaching was slowly loosening

the encirclement and began to retreat.

It was to attract attention to the Drag-Ride, while the slimes that smell like oil were advancing without being noticed.

It didn't take much imagination to think about what the new slime could do.

「Dragon Marauder's division commander Drakkhen....., how outrageous!」

Lisha reflexively bit her fingernail. Philuffy silently advanced forward then.

「If they are allowed to get near further than this, even the cathedral will be blown away. That's why, I'm going.」

「.....Philuffy.」

Lisha muttered shortly.

She understood that in this situation, there was no other way than that.

「But, it looks like the oily slime might end with just this. So, take care of the rest.」

Right after saying that with a serious face, Philuffy drove her Typhoon and charged toward the Wyrms force in front without stopping.

Instantly, the enemy army backed away in hurry and aimed the cannon muzzle toward the ground.

There was still some distance until the cathedral, but they intended to explode the slime to avoid getting mixed up into it.

「Biting Flare」

That moment, Philuffy also activated Typhoon's special armament.

The energy from the armored arm was accumulated, then she grasped the ground in front of her and exploded it.

Right after that, the grey colored slime also caught fire, and explosion blast and flash covered the visibility of the whole place.

「-.....!」

Philuffy held her ground even now while she was swallowed by intense blast and flame.

She endured using strengthened endurance and barrier that was the characteristic of the land battle type Divine Drag-Ride Typhoon.

「—Charge-! Suppress the cathedral using this chance!」

Right after the explosion settled, the Wyrms and Drake force of Dragon Marauder assaulted.

Everyone of them were holding close range weapon, they charged forward without stopping with the intention to squash the resistance.

Celis and Philuffy couldn't move properly anymore. They were barely escaping while luring the enemy, but they were mostly unable to attack.

Because the enemy understood that, they too didn't split too much of their number to pursue the two.

Behind there was only the cathedral that almost collapsed, the noble believers, and then the Drag-Knights of Sanctuary Knight Order who couldn't even use their Drag-Ride properly.

Lisha who was in a desperate situation that was driven into corner could hear communication from Dragon Voice.

『How is your well-being, Lisha-san?』

『-.....!? This ero woman, where have you been until now!? Eee, in the first place, right now isn't the time—』

『Is that so? That's unfortunate. Even though I finally finished laying out trap around the whole area of cathedral—』

『What.....?』

『It's from the pillar in front of the cathedral until the spot 10 m from there. Can you lure the enemy there?』

『You—. No, got it.』

Lisha didn't understand so far until the specific of what Yoruka was planning.

But, this girl who was towering above others only in her fighting ability was estimating that there was a chance to bring down the force of Dragon Marauder.

Right now, there was no other option except betting in that.

「GOOO-! It doesn't matter even if the archbishop is killed! All troops charge!」

The Dragon Marauders on the ground approached loudly. Lisha resolved herself, then she pulled out Tiamat's Sword Device and took the standard stance.

「—Sanctuary Knight Orderm pray to the god later! The last defense is starting from here!」

And then, she called out to the friendly troops at the back who were making expression of despair with their whole body wounded all over.

「I'll wage war on you Drakkhen! With the way of my own style, as the princess of the new kingdom!」

—

Part 10

「Lux-kun-!?!」

Lux whose armor was smashed by Mel's attack fell to the snow field below.

But, before Krulcifer who flew her Fafnir in order to save him, Mel Gizalut was standing in the way.

「—Stop acting like you are worried about other people. Even though you aren't even a human of this world.」

Mel muttered with bottomless hatred and rage filling her voice.

The Elixir that Mel used was negligible compared to Dilwy who used it on his whole body, but it strengthened her immature body and caused her to possibly use Divine Drag-Ride for a long time.

On the other hand, Krulcifer's mind was wrapped with confusion. She was unable to even control Fafnir satisfactorily.

「Why—」

She barely defended against Mel's attack while muttering with pained expression.

「Why, is it.....」

She had no leeway to go help Lux who was struck down from covering her.

The Drag-Knights of Sanctuary Knight Order suffered damage from the remaining swarm of Abyss and they were defeated one after another.

Krulcifer herself had been thinking all this time.

That even if she originated from the Ruin and she wasn't recognized by her family, she still had a place to belong.

But—, if it was her who caused the Ruin to rampage and brought calamity to

this country—.

「Why am I—」

Things that everyone else had, the place to belong, family, homeland. Even though she couldn't be accepted by all of those, even so she would fight in order to obtain them. She should have resolved herself like that, and yet.

If she was the cause of the calamity, then even protecting her family using her own hand would be beyond her reach.

If the incident of rampage was the truth then, —there would really be no place for her to belong at anymore.

「—There is no need to feel lost. I'll give you your end here.」

Mel muttered with empty gaze.

And then, from above Krulcifer who took stance trying to rally Fafnir, a large cannon was aimed to below.

「Ground BusterEarth Smasher Horn Bullet!」

- GAUNN!* Along with such thunderous roar, a streamlined warhead that looked like a spire was fired to below.

The moment Ddraig Gwiber in Wyvern Mode fired its one other special armament, a shudder ran through Krulcifer.

「Ojou-sama, please escape! That's a wide range annihilation weapon for use against ground surface! It will break even bedrock underground, a weapon to change terrain—」

Alterize's voice came from afar.

At this rate, everyone would get mixed up into it, along with the old sanctuary site.

「Stop it already, Mel!」

With a tone that sounded like praying, Krulcifer fired the freezing bullet of Freezing Cannon in the attempt to prevent the attack.

But, Mel muttered right before the frozen warhead hit the ground.

「—Dual Shift」

The Divine Raiment of Ddraig Gwiber was activated, and the freezing was dissolved instantly.

The shell that pierced the stone paving of the old sanctuary site and the ground exploded deep underground.

「—!？」

The stone building of old sanctuary site and the ground broke into pieces and earth and sand were rolled up like tornado.

Krulcifer herself was also mixed up into the explosion and she was blown away far to the back.

—Annihilation.

The power that was to the degree it also dragged Lux and her families into it turned her sight total darkness.

When strength left her whole body and even her consciousness became distant, the scenery around her suddenly changed completely.

—

「Krulcifer-sama! Are you safe dearimasu!？」

「-....., you are—, Ney?」

Krulcifer was lying on the ground with her armor dispelled. The Automata girl she ordered to stay put was rushing to where she was.

Tears were gathering in her eyes while she softly lifted up Krulcifer's body in her arms.

「This place—the viewing room? Did you, bring me here?」

「My deepest apologize for acting impertinently dearimasu. But....., I cannot bear to look supervisor-sama getting even more hurt than this dearimasu.」

Ney casted down her eyes with drooping dog ears.

Several images of light were floating at the surrounding metal wall, reflecting the scene on the ground.

There she could see the figure of the Sanctuary Knight Order members in disadvantage from the assault of the remaining Abysses.

There were also the figure of Alterize, and Zain who fought even while in confusion.

She couldn't see Lux's figure.

He was directly hit by Mel's attack from covering her, she remembered until she was injured but—,

「This is not the time for rest. If I don't go back, to help—」

She stood up and headed to the pedestal at the center of the viewing room.

In order to use the teleportation device and returned to over there,

「For what—you will return dearimasu?」

But, Ney's question that sounded sad stopped Krulcifer on her track.

「I overstepped with my words dearimasu. But, in this situation there is nothing that can be done dearimasu. I who haven't gone to the control room is still not connected with the Ruin's system. I cannot control the Abyss dearimasu. So—」

—

Ney gazed up to her with the imitation eyes that looked pleadingly.

「It's fine even if you don't go anywhere anymore dearimasu. After all, this place is the homeland of XferKey's Supervisor-sama.」

「What do you mean.....? Your memory, should not—」

When Ney got out of the Ruin to the outside world, she forgot most of her internal information.

She should have ordered her so she couldn't remember unnecessary memory, and also so she couldn't investigate.

When Krulcifer recalled and pointed that out, Ney averted her gaze guiltily.

「I'm sorry....., when I was asked to decipher that three 『books』 and confirmed them, I remembered completely then. Regarding the way this Ruin

came to be, and the existence of all of you—」

The Automata who temporarily disconnected her memory and ability as Gear Leader for the sake of going outside the Ruin.

If she was able to return to Ruin, even if she didn't reach until the control room, it wouldn't be strange even if she had the function to supplement her ability to a certain degree.

By chance—or perhaps she should have associated the idea seeing that the place was called archive, Ney seemed to have recovered a part of her memory.

「Then, even my true identity—」

「Yes, Xfer-sama. You are this place's—, one of the ancient human race who established the Ruin. You are the last survivor existing in this Hall dearimasu.」

「.....I am, this Ruin's last—」

Krulcifer who heard what Ney said lost her words from that fact.

Right after that, a terrific impact attacked from above the Hall's viewing room.

—

Part 11

「Wha, what are you doing! Mel Gizalut!? Your enemy should be the Abyss!」

The scream of Pope Nias reverberated through the snow field.

The special armament of Ddraig Gwiber's Wyvern Mode, Ground Buster, its second shot hit the ground right below. The aftershock from that impact also dragged the Sanctuary Knight Order members into it.

No death resulted just barely, but the foothold at the surrounding collapsed, and the Drag-Knights were cornered to a disadvantaged position.

The abandoned building of the old sanctuary site was already collapsing until no trace of its original shape remained.

「.....」

But, even when the pope reprimanded like that, Mel's expression didn't change.

She was just directing that cold gaze that was completely chilled like ice toward the place where Krulcifer vanished.

Thanks to the augmentation from Elixir, the lack of her stamina was compensated, but in exchange she became unable to control her emotion.

The hatred toward Krulcifer and the destructive impulse were completely ruling her body.

「Next bullet, loading.....」

The attack wasn't in the shape of energy torrent, it was a warhead of Ground Buster that possessed physical substance. It had to be formed anew every time, so the attack couldn't be fired consecutively.

The cannon muzzle was kept directed to the Ruin right below, while Mel was hovering in the air.

The battle wouldn't end until she dealt the final blow to Krulcifer.

Until the outer shell of Ruin collapsed, she would fire no matter how many times. Sensing that, the members of Sanctuary Knight Order were shaking.

「.....I'll end this. I'll destroy something like Ruin.」

「.....Kuh, at this rate—!?!」

Alterize desperately swung her twin swords and finished off the remaining Abyss, but she had no leeway in order to protect the wounded comrades and Pope Nias.

She was made to stand at the depth of despair without being able to even aid Lux and Krulcifer.

—

Part 12

『Transmission.....outer wall, half destroyed. Taking refuge to underground is strongly recommended.』

The impact from the Ground Buster that Mel fired destroyed the Hall's ceiling—the outer crust part, a robotic voice resounded inside the viewing room.

Ney Louches who was sitting on the control seat advised with a flustered face.

「Let's hide, Xfer-sama! This place is already in danger! Please escape until the underground control room and activate the defense system. If you do that—」

But, even while grimacing from the aftershock of the impact, Krulcifer couldn't take action.

「What about that rampage incident? That day one and half a year ago, what happened in this Ruin?」

「That, was.....」

「This is an order. Answer me.」

The short words from Krulcifer that weren't filled with emotion caused Ney to avert her gaze.

And then, after hesitating for a few seconds, she told the truth.

「In the information that I read from the record in the viewing room, Xfer-sama who left from the Ruin returned here again twice, seven years ago and one and half a year ago. It was especially at the second time, due to a blank phenomenon that couldn't be observed for some reason, everyone other than you died in that place. I chased after Xfer-sama and left my position as the Ruin's Gear leader to search for you might be related to that too.」

「And then, at that time the defense of the Ruin reacted, and a rampage

occurred—it was, something like that?」

Ney silently showed affirmation at Krulcifer's question.

Krulcifer who heard the answer leaned on the nearby object and put her hand on it.

She understood the real reason her family was avoiding her.

It wasn't just because she displayed her talent and strength.

It was because they knew, that she was actually the cause that triggered the Ruin's rampage and brought calamity to the country.

「Did I, hurt them.....? The people of this country, and Mel's family, everyone—」

「It wasn't Xfer-sama's fault dearimasu! It was because everyone tried to use you and me—they tried to use the power of the Ruin dearimasu! That's why, please forget it already dearimasu!」

「.....Forget?」

Ney clung on Krulcifer's arm and yelled.

「You don't need to worry dearimasu. If you can regain the remaining function of the Ruin, surely it will be able to protect Xfer-sama dearimasu. I will be by your side dearmiasu. Even without getting involved with something like the outside world, you won't have to worry about anything anymore dearimasu!」

「——」

Keeping away everything at distance and forgot it completely.

Krulcifer was struck by Ney's desperate entreaty and lost her words.

Perhaps it was just as Ney said.

At the very least there was no more comrade who was the same ancient race like her in this Hall.

From the start there was also no ground that could make it possible for her to be recognized as family in Einfolk house.

Her effort to get closer to her family was already meaningless.

Both her parents, her brothers, and also hersisters, everyone feared her who made the Ruin rampaged.

「.....There is already, no meaning for me to return—」

Even though she thought that, why?

Why was it, her legs couldn't move she wondered.

『If you won't come out, then I'll drag you out.』

The image of light projected on the wall surface showed Mel muttering at the air above the collapsed old sanctuary site.

And then she bared a gruesome smile and declared her attack toward Krulcifer.

『Disappear, our.....the world's enemy.』

「Run away dearimasu! Xfer-sama—!」

The moment Ney pulled on Krulcifer's hand, the third shot of Ground Buster was fired to the ground.

If the underground was exploded more than this, everyone would get dragged into a cave-in due to the land subsidence.

At that time when the despair from the absolutely desperate situation crossed the back of her mind, a voice could be heard.

「—Linker Burst.」

At the same time with the muttering of those words, the warhead of Ground Buster veered sideways. It was radically drawn to a point.

Over there was the figure of Lux. Blood was flowing from his forehead, dying his silver hair red.

The wound stretching from his shoulder toward his chest, and the blood flowing from his forehead, they must be from receiving the fragments from the broken Wyvern.

That Lux was standing while wearing jet black Divine Drag-Ride Bahamut.

「Lux-sama-!?!」

Alterize who saw that yelled. In that moment Bahamut's Howling Howl sent flying the drawn warhead.

Even while being showered with the aftershock of the explosion impact right after that, Lux didn't move in the slightest.

「You are also planning to stand in my way?」

Mel whose attack toward Ruin was prevented sent a fearless smile at Lux.

It was a wicked smile with condensed hatred in it.

But, it was as though Lux didn't waver even against that. He returned a straightforward gaze toward Mel.

「I won't let you hurt Krulcifer-san even more than this.」

「.....Hah!」

Mel let out a laugh at Lux's words, at the same time she made Ddraig Gwiber swooped down.

She swung down that large Halberd from overhead and pursued the dodging Lux with pursuing attack.

「If you are protecting that woman, then you have resolved yourself right?」

The attack of the enraged Mel was becoming monotone although it had strength.

Perhaps because she couldn't see Krulcifer's figure, she would try to lure her out by tormenting Lux, or perhaps she was completely driven by emotion and she was losing her thinking ability.

Either way, for the current Lux who still had damage remaining in his body, it was a fortunate situation.

—*zaza, zazazaza-.....!*

『Pretty complacent aren't you? Even though at the holy capital your comrades are almost annihilated like this.』

Right after discordant sound that was like sandstorm resounded, Drakkhen's voice was sent to Lux's position.

「.....」

『If you can hear how about replying at least? Well, it's not time for that I guess. After all Mel Gizalut over there is strengthened by Elixir. Even if it's you, you must be at a loss facing her right?』

「—Dragon Marauder's division commander Drakkhen. Is this conflict your gambit?」

When Lux responded with a short sentence, a laughter returned.

『You must have heard the rumor right? The ability of the Divine Drag-Ride, Asp that I possess—the power to control sound. I made the sound of Orphel and let Mel heard her fake last words to make her attack you guys.』

「So even that is your aim—, how many inhuman things you are intending to pile up?」

Drakkhen was telling Lux the truth was in order to seal his combat strength.

She told him that Mel was just an innocent girl who was tricked was her tactic to make Lux harbored hesitation so that he would hesitate to attack.

She purposefully taught him the situation at the holy capital was also in order to shake him.

『Something like a battle where you don't rack your ingenuity is like you are just searching for excuse when you lose right from the start. Don't you think so too? Mister Black Hero.』

But, Lux also noticed Drakkhen's hidden aim.

He thought of tactic to deal with that while returning his focus to Mel before him.

「—Fine then. Can she keep hiding even when you, her fiancée is almost killed,let's try it out!」

Mel switched Ddraig Gwiber into Wyrms Mode and came swinging her Halberd consecutively at him.

Lux was pushed toward the remaining foothold, and right after that, his field of vision was enveloped in thick mist and he became unable to see.

「-.....!?!」

It was a disadvantageous situation for both sides, but it became hard for him to see Mel's figure and he was unable to see through the preliminary movement of her attack.

Now it was impossible to use Quick Shot that was the application of Bahamut's Divine Raiment.

And then, in the situation where he could only see a few ml ahead of him, close quarter combat became the main choice whether he wanted it or not.

Accordingly, Ddraig Gwiber in land battle mode that could accelerate by stepping firmly on the ground was in overwhelming advantage. And seeing that the opponent possessed anti-aircraft weapon, Lux was also unable to escape to the sky.

He was forced into a one-sided defensive battle before Mel's attack broke through his barrier.

The bleeding on his shoulder and head didn't lessen. Each time Lux blocked the attack using his great sword, the armor he wore was soaked with blood.

But, even so Lux's expression wasn't upset.

He did the best he could do in that disadvantage, lured away Mel, and held out in that place.

『Lux-sama! The Abyss extermination over here is finished! I will assist right aw—』

Midway, the few remaining Abyss was finally defeated by Alterize wearing her EX Wyvern.

She communicated that to Lux using Dragon Voice. Lux kept his focus on Mel's attack while replying to that.

『If it's me I'm fine. In exchange please tell Lord Stiyl—Krulcifer-san's father this. His voice will reach her too if it's from above the old sanctuary site!』

Stiyl was taking cold and brusque attitude, but all this time he had been showing concern for her.

He intentionally made Lux to stay in Einfolk house, and nonchalantly probed his relation with Krulcifer.

Lux staked a single hope at his deduction that resulted from that.

In order to save the girl who was important to him once more right now.

—

Part 13

「Why—de, arimasu?」

It wasn't Krulcifer, but Ney who was whispering in a daze while watching the battle from the viewing room of the Hall.

「Why is that person, still fighting to that extent even though there is no chance of winning?」

「I see, that's true isn't it.....」

Why, did she think that she had no ally or anything.

Had she gave in to despair, thinking that she had no place in this world now.

—

『However, I just want you to promise me one thing. That no matter what kind of relationship there was between me and you——, don't turn hostile toward me, that our relationship with each other right now won't change.』

『No matter what happens, I will always be Krulcifer-san's ally. I promise.』

—

Even though the young man who recognized her made that promise to her before, she completely forgot it.

Even though she knew, that he wouldn't break an important promise no matter what.

『.....Krulcifer-san, can you hear?』

There, Lux muttered while receiving Mel's fierce attack on the ground.

『When I was banished from the imperial court of Arcadia Empire, I was thinking, that perhaps there is no one who will recognize me anymore in this world.』

Whether it was his family that was related to him by blood, or the people who were resenting the imperial family, they were all seeing Lux as hated enemy.

Lux who once suffered heartache and felt despair toward the whole world was saved by Philuffy.

『But, I noticed. If it's really something important, if it's something that you want, then you must not give up no matter how painful it is. That's why—I and Lisha-sama and everyone, will become Krulcifer-san's strength!』

Lux said that and continued to fight.

Krulcifer merely watched wordlessly at that with a wry smile.

「.....He is really an exasperating person. After all he is always unawarely getting hold of a person's feeling like that.」

‘But, surely it's like that.’ Krulcifer thought.

Even if the unseen past was toying with her, she had a truth in the present.

That it wasn't a mistake, for her to fall in love with him.

「Ney, please prepare the transfer to the surface. Also, can you apply the ability in this『book』 that has been deciphered completely into Fafnir?」

「Xfer-sama....., this is—!?!」

「No, my name is Krulcifer you know. That's why, don't mistake it from here on.」

「.....I understand, dearimasu. Krulcifer-sama.」

Krulcifer once more lifted Fafnir's Sword Device before her eyes.

And then, when she gazed at the battlefield that was still continuing, she came to hear a single voice.

—

「—You're wrong! Actually you aren't to blame for anything! Krulcifer!」

Stiyl Einfeld faced toward the spot where Krulcifer vanished and raised his voice as though to call out to her.

His face wasn't the usual severe and rigid expression, but an expression that

was blurred with impatience and pain.

He responded to Lux's call and came to this place with his own feet.

「.....What does that mean?」

Mel reacted to Stiyl's shout and turned a chilly gaze and voice toward that direction.

「Seven years ago, the nobles who sniffed your secret took you to the Ruin, and a rampage occurred! It was my duty so that such thing wouldn't happen, but I couldn't stop them! And then one and half a year ago, that time even the high official of the theocracy turned traitor, tricked you, and brought you to the Ruin which caused that incident!」

「-.....!?!」

Alterize and Zain, and also the Sanctuary Knight Order members present there who heard that turned speechless and stood still.

「There might be some wicked bunches still who are aiming at you might in the theocracy. That's why, I thought there is nothing I can do but distancing you from the house! I couldn't protect you from malice, except by doing that!」

‘That's why’ —Stiyl rolled up the sleeve of his coat and took off the glove that he wore even inside room.

Underneath it, terrible scar that was running from the right arm's elbow until the palm was remaining.

『That's—!?!』

Krulcifer who saw that from the viewing room reflexively held her breath.

The memory of that time that was remaining hazily in her mind.

She remembered that someone was desperately saving her, but Stiyl told her that it wasn't him.

Since that day, Stiyl was wearing glove even inside house and using cane to walk.

The fact that Krulcifer herself became the impetus of conflict.

Because of that, Stiyl didn't tell Krulcifer in order to hide that he was seriously

injured.

「.....It's an unsightly story! I became unable to fight anymore! I couldn't protect your wellbeing, except by hurting your heart! That's why, my daughter.....! Don't be hurt alone just for the sake of a fool like me!」

Stiyl reach out his deeply scarred hand and raised his voice.

At that moment, the flying Ddraig Gwiber fired Ground Buster to right below.

—

Part 14

「All-out firing at southeast! Fire!」

—At the same time, the holy capital.

Around the cathedral where the building had collapsed and the country's important people were left behind.

Lisha gathered the remaining combat force that was partially destroyed due to the Chaff Slimes and avalanche and took command.

Celis and Philuffy were each fighting hard with their Divine Drag-Ride and lured away the enemy for them, but it was already impossible for them to fight properly in their state. They were only barely avoiding falling to enemy's hand.

And then, the force of Dragon Marauder finally surrounded the cathedral and came in pressure. Lisha gathered the Drag-Knights of Sanctuary Knight Order and intercepted the enemy using Cannon attack.

「The other side has more number of people who can fight! Hold back the enemy faster than they're coming and prevent them from approaching!」

The spot where the cathedral was located was higher than the surrounding.

Using the difference in angle from that geographical advantage, they drove away the approaching enemy force that consisted of Wyrms and Drake.

The Drag-Knights of Sanctuary Knight Order once broke down due to Drakkhen's tactic and lost their fighting spirit, but they somehow formed the formation to fight back due to Lisha's voice and leadership.

「.....How long they're going to continue this unsightly vain struggle!」

The man who was leading Dragon Marauder's Wyvern force in the air was clicking his tongue while looking at that sight.

At the sky twelve Legions under Lisha's control were flying around. They were

unable to approach carelessly.

But, she should be tired already, she wouldn't be able to control the special armament for long.

Therefore, they didn't go attacking forcibly, they were standing by while staying alert to the surrounding.

At the same time, although Lisha had gathered the surviving force and fought back to prevent the enemy's Wyrms from charging forward, the enemy's momentum was gradually gaining on them.

Because of the Chaff Slime clinging on Tiamat, her control was dulling and the exhaustion was double than usual.

「Not yet, until Lux come back, we still—」

Even so, Lisha's heart wasn't yielding.

However, the limit finally arrived. The moment Legions lost control and fell, the battle situation moved.

—

Part 15

- Zaza-, zazazaza.....*

The sound control ability that was the Divine Raiment of Drakkhen's Divine Drag-Ride Asp.

A voice once more reached toward the position of Lux who was battling Mel using Bahamut, and it happened.

『—How long you are intending not to show your hand? At this rate everyone will die without you giving any instruction whatsoever, is that what you feel like doing?』

Drakkhen provoked with a sticky tone.

But, Lux didn't even show any sign of impatience, he replied to her with a calm voice.

「Dragon Marauder's Human Dragon division commander Drakkhen. I'm not that good at bargaining, but there is something that even I know.」

『.....Hoo, what could it be?』

Lux crossed sword with Mel's Halberd using his great sword while talking dispassionately.

Inside the heavy fog where his field of vision was blocked, because Mel was constantly approaching him to take the initiative, even though Lux was unable to see her, but by memorizing Mel's attack pattern he was performing battle where both sides didn't give any ground to each other.

「The more someone is shaken and impatient, the more they speak. And in the middle they will use some kind of plan. Since some time ago you are fearing something all this time.」

『.....』

Drakkhen fell silent just for a moment because Lux hit the bull's eye.

The battle this time looked like it was progressing just as Drakkhen planned with the situation completely within her grasp from beginning to end. But, there was just one point that was shadowing the situation as risky factor.

Ironically, because Yoruka didn't match the pace of the other members and took independent action, Drakkhen lost sight of her whereabouts.

She had investigated the information about Yoruka, but even after knowing about her preeminent sword skill and the true shape of her Divine Raiment Spell Code that could steal the control authority of Drag-Ride, her existence was still troublesome in the extreme.

This, Drakkhen was engaging Lux in conversation since some time ago to search for her whereabouts.

「Haven't you noticed? Her whereabouts is—.....」

『.....!?』

Suddenly, the sound that Drakkhen was picking from Lux's surrounding was getting distant.

Drakkhen hurriedly raised the sensitivity of the sound picking to the maximum to try to make out the sound at the end, in that instant—she caught Mel's voice first.

「I should have taught you, that there is no place to escape in the sky though?」

『What are—?』

The moment Drakkhen muttered that, her world suddenly burst out.

- DOOOOoooOONN!*

「—GU, GAaAAAAaaaAAAAAAH.....!」

- Butsun*, her eardrum was torn and her skull was stirred up.

The thunderous sound that felt like the atmosphere was ruptured painted over everything and pain stabbed into her brain.

「U, GUa.....!」

It was her remaining right ear's eardrum that barely picked up her own groan.

The camouflage function that was being used by special equipment-type Asp was dispelled.

「What, just.....happened!?!」

When Drakkhen who was picking up sound from Lux's surrounding murmured, an answer came back.

「Reload on Fire—it compressed the air vibration at my surrounding and then strengthened it until several times over.」

「—!?! You bastard-!」

Drakkhen held her breath in surprise hearing those words that were said concisely.

Ddraig Gwiber's special armament, Aerial Buster.

It scattered fuel that was refined and turned into vapor at the air, and then exploded the fuel along with the air. An anti-aircraft weapon.

Lux's tactic was making use of that thunderous sound that was so loud it pierced the eardrum.

Drakkhen's manipulated sound to transmit information back to herself. Lux used it against herself.

『I found her—Aruji-sama.』

Instantly, Yoruka's voice reached Lux through Dragon Voice.

Drakkhen's Asp was hiding in the snowy landscape of the holy capital using camouflage function, but because the Asp was picking up the thunderous sound just now, the sound was also transmitted to the surrounding. Her position was pinned down from that.

「Ku—!?!」

『Then, let's start it anytime now. The tactic of ours.』(Yoruka) –

Part 16

「Wha—!?!」

The whole force of Dragon Marauder that was charging toward the collapsed cathedral suddenly stopped moving and their face went pale.

The barrier of string that was laid out at the surrounding was tinged with the light of Divine Raiment.

「Special armament String of Spider—and then, Spell Code.」

The moment Yoruka who was standing on the nearby bell tower overlooking the cathedral muttered that, the light of Divine Raiment that Yato no Kami emitted was transmitted through the string and restricted the movement of the Dragon Marauders.

The special armament of unseen steel string possessed by Yato no Kami.

It was laid out literally like spider's web, and then the preys were simultaneously caught by the Divine Raiment Spell Code.

Yoruka requested Lisha to intercept the enemies wasn't just for buying time to lay out the string.

It was also to thin out the enemy's consciousness toward the string with their attention diverted by this side's counterattack.

Thus—.

「U, AAAAAH!?!」

「What the hell is this!? The Drag-Ride's control, isn't working!?!」

About half of Dragon Marauder's Drag-Knights were caught in Spell Code's effect instantly and they attacked at the remaining half that was able to move.

Friendly fire.

While frenzied scream was echoing, the remaining Sanctuary Knight Order also counterattacked and the enemy number was reduced with accelerated speed.

When Lisha's face peeked out from the collapsed cathedral to the outside, the number of enemy Drag-Knight who was able to move properly had been reduced to one.

It was only the division commander of Dragon Marauder who was hiding until now while manipulating the battlefield, the commander Drakkhen.

「That damn ero woman, making us getting cold sweat like that.」

Even while having cold sweat trickling from her forehead, Lisha was looking up at that sight with a fearless grin.

Because she was continuously using Tiamat for a long time while receiving the encroachment of Chaff Slime, her exhaustion was reaching the limit.

Far from using Divine Raiment, she was already unable to even use special armament. Maintaining her armor was just something she was barely being able to do.

But, she mustn't collapse even with her current condition.

The noble believers waiting for rescue inside the collapsed cathedral.

And then the members of Sanctuary Knight Order who were wounded or falling into state unfit for fighting.

She couldn't show her unsightly appearance in order to keep up their morale too.

Also in order to become a worthy princess for Lux who became her knight, she mustn't ran out of strength until the very end.

「To think, he has this kind of hand up his sleeve..... —!？」

Drakkhen was muttering with anguished expression while pressing on her right ear with broken eardrum.

Right after that, she noticed the vibration of air from behind her and she barely blocked the sword flash attacking her.

「My, you are more capable than I thought. Even though I planned to approach by killing my presence.」

「Kirihime, Yoruka.....!?!」

The extra-large Blade that Yoruka's Yato no Kami wielded and the sharp claws stretching out from the armored arm of Drakkhen's Asp crossed each other with scattered sparks.

「—But, that too is at an end.」

But, even with that Yoruka's advantage was unshakeable.

The Divine Raiment that could control other Drag-Ride just by touching it, Spell Code. As long as she had that, it was meaningless just by blocking her attack.

「Damn it-!?!」

When Yoruka tried to snatch the control of the Drag-Ride Drakkhen was wearing, the Divine Raiment's red pattern emerged out but—, for some reason the red letters weren't transmitted to Asp and they stopped flowing.

「—Not. Don't look down on me. I have prepared countermeasure—against all of you!」

Her eyes were bared open at the same time with her voice, then she slashed with the claws stretching out from her other armored arm.

Yoruka quickly backed away and dodged it. She then noticed the secret of the trick Drakkhen used.

「You have a very interesting preparation there.」

The katana-shaped Blade that Yato no Kami possessed, black viscous liquid was clinging on its blade.

Chaff Slime.

It didn't have any physical attack power at all, but it could dull Drag-Ride's control and lowered the spec. This new type Abyss was controlled using Asp's sound wave to make it stick only at the armor's surface.

The ability of the Divine Raiment Spell Code could only affect Drag-Ride.

Drakkhen's tactic took advantage of that blind spot and used an Abyss as shield.

「I've said it but, the Asp that I'm wearing still has Chaff Slime inside. No matter even if it's someone skilled like you, you won't be able to defeat me.」

「Do you really think that after just one cheap trick like this?」

But, Yoruka didn't look perturbed at all, she returned a cold smile and snapped open her eyes.

Purple iris. The devil eye in her right eye that had Baptism applied into it shined mysteriously. It instantly caught the figure of Drakkhen leaping backward—Yoruka jumped.

「—!?!」

The special move that read the wavelength of the opponent's consciousness, aiming to attack at the moment there was a pause in it—Instant Strike.

Drakkhen felt that she was being exposed to verge of death. Even so when she tried to carry out the plan that was the finishing blow, she already acted.

「Hell ChoirDemonic Song Holy Chant」

Right above the collapsed cathedral, Asp jumped on the ceiling where there was fallen snow remaining and both its hands crawled through it.

The snow collapsed due to the vibration of sound wave, and a lot of snow poured down toward Lisha and others who were below.

「Watch, out-.....! Everyone, retreat inside!」

Lisha's consciousness was already hazy, but she activated Suppressor with her last strength.

While the falling mass of snow was held back by gravity control, the Sanctuary Knight Order members evacuated inside.

「No good, I already—」

Finally even Lisha who was supported by her spirit reached her limit. The Divine Raiment of Suppressor cut off, and following after that her armor was dispelled. Mass of snow was pouring down from above, and her whole body

was completely buried with white.

(Am I dead? In this kind of place—?)

Her whole sight was swallowed by snow and her consciousness turned distant.

At the end, Lisha saw a black shadow.

—

Part 17

- PAKIN-!* The warhead that froze instantly fell on the floor of the old sanctuary site.

Before the Ground Buster that Mel fired impacted, a Drag-Ride prevented that from happening.

「Krulcifer.....!? You—」

The father Stiyl noticed her, but he was astonished by her appearance. The eldest brother Zain was also speechless.

Lux and Alterize held their breath at the same time.

「.....Is that your true appearance I wonder?」

Mel who was looking down from above wasn't perturbed. She showed a belligerent smile.

Krulcifer looked down quietly toward her and told the answer.

「I guess. This is the proof that I am related by blood toward the first clan—the ancient race of people who brought the Ruin into this world.」

In respond Krulcifer answered the question indifferently.

The obvious answer was right there.

The shape of Fafnir that was covering her body wasn't any different from usual in a glance.

But looking closer, the machine and the body were glued closely to each other even deeper compared to the appearance when she was wearing the armor normally.

—No, it wasn't at the level of being glued closely, her arms and legs were assimilated to the machine itself.

Above Krulcifer's white skin, red lines that resembled the pattern carved on the surface of Sword Device were flowing like tattoo.

「Full Connect. The form that accomplished fusion with Drag-Ride, that can only be used by XferKey's Supervisor, the caln that was the one who developed Drag-Ride and possessed greatest Drag-Ride aptitude value. With this strength that was sleeping in the archive of Ruin, I'll drive you away, Mel.」

「Krulcifer-san!?!」

Lux who was breathing hard gasping for air called out to her uneasily.

Krulcifer who noticed that smiled calmly toward Lux.

「Let's talk later. You go to save the princess and others. I'm fine already, that's why—I'll show you, that I can protect my family.」

Seeing that smile that was filled with deep affection, Lux was convinced.

She wasn't losing her sanity or anything like Mel.

She was standing here once again with the confidence and pride that she had built up, just like her usual self.

「—I'll leave it to you.」

Lux said that and made Bahamut skated in the sky.

His figure instantly became far away with a speed that was several level above when he was crossing swords with Mel just now.

After seeing that off, Mel stood up on the broken ceiling of the old sanctuary site and glared at Krulcifer.

「I won't let you get away for sure this time, I will without fail—crush you.」

「I myself—will teach you. The thing that I'm actually wishing for, and the thing that you have to obtain.」

Mel who was sneering with shadowed expression, and Krulcifer who was staring straight to her.

The two's Drag-Rides moved simultaneously and the battle began.

Part 18

「-.....!? U, a.....」

Lisha was buried under the mass of snow, but she noticed the sensation of being carried by something and her consciousness returned.

「Lu, x.....?」

「How unfortunate. It's not actually just as you wishes.」

When Lisha opened her eyes weakly with vague consciousness, she saw before her Yoruka wearing black pilot suit.

「You—,-!?」

A beat later, Lisha grasped the situation.

Yoruka's Yato no Kami that let go of its Blade was rescuing Lisha using its armored arms from the snow.

「Wh, y? Did you get Drakkhen?」

「If I overlook you getting buried alive, then that might be actually what happened just now.」

Yoruka formed a smile on her lips with a tone that was unusually cynical.

Right after Drakkhen shook off the snow on the cathedral using sound wave, Yoruka didn't continue her attack and came to rescue Lisha.

The action of the girl who wouldn't get along with other people at all and swore loyalty to only Lux caused Lisha to reflexively doubt her own eyes.

「Kukukuku. This result is unexpected. Well, thank to that my victory is set in stone so I'm saved though.」

Drakkhen's laughing voice came from above the cathedral.

Even Lisha managed to understand the meaning of her confidence.

「O, oi ero woman, that Drag-Ride—!」

「Yes, she really is a wary enemy. It looks like the aforementioned slime is also inserted into the snow above this building since who know when.」

The armor of Yato no Kami was already covered with a lot of Chaff Slime.

If the armor had been completely covered by this much, no matter how excellent Yoruka was in handling Drag-Ride, she was surely unable to fight like this.

But, Yoruka too should also understand such thing.

「Why....., for the sake of just me—」

「It's simple.」

Yoruka answered with her usual smile toward the dumbfounded Lisha.

「You are one of the special and beneficial existences for Aruji-sama. —I was able to decide that there is no mistaking that. It will be a waste to let you die here, that's all there is to it.」

The reason for Yoruka's action was for the sake of her master Lux until the end.

But it wasn't like before, where she was only protecting Lux's existence. The feeling of her master Lux—for the first time Yoruka took it into consideration and acted.

「.....Yoruka, you」

Lisha noticed that and she was about to say something, it was then,

「Besides—you have an important work to do. It's not desirable for the candidate bodies that will give birth to Aruji-sama's heir to be reduced even by one.」

「Whaa-.....!?!」

Yoruka's words that she spoke with a carefree smile caused Lisha's face to turn red spontaneously.

「Do, don't say strange thing so suddenly-! Just what do you think I am—?!」

「My? So you don't have any inclination for that? Even though it looks like you wish to be married for life with Aruji-sama and think really strongly of him.」

「Tha, that's.....! Tha, that isn't it, there is various order to everything you see. Spe, specifically, in the next date, if I can progress until holding hand together—」

When Yoruka pointed out to Lisha, her face blushed and she averted her face while entwining her fingers together.

At the same time, Drakkhen who was watching that situation finally grew impatient and she was descending down.

「Looks like you two are really composed there but, you guys don't have combat force remaining anymore—. With this, it's the end!」

She lifted up the claws on both her armored arms, then she swung them down while falling.

Even now in this situation where she couldn't move because of the Chaff Slime, Yoruka's smile didn't crumble.

「Yes, the end is also near it seems. —For you that is.」

「—!?!」

Right before Yoruka's murmur was over, Drakkhen held her breath in sudden realization.

A crossing of Drag-Rides happened within an instant along with the roaring sound of slicing wind.

- GAKII-!* Asp's sharp claws that were lifted up narrowly blocked that attack.

Lux wearing the black violent dragon, Bahamut was slashing toward Drakkhen.

「—Ku, you bastard-!? You are saying you've finished off that Mel!?!」

Drakkhen groaned with a shocked look, but Lux wasn't perturbed.

Without pause Lux finished swinging his sword to the end forcefully, sending

Drakkhen flying from midair toward the snow field in the distance.

「Lux! So you came—. -....., your wound!?!」

Lisha showed her joy that her knight came running to here, but her face instantly became clouded.

The wounds that he got after covering Krulcifer from Mel's attack resulted in thin cut from his shoulder until his chest, and blood flowing from his head. His silver hair and half his face were dyed red.

「I'm sorry for my lateness. Also, please don't worry. I'm all right.」

But, Lux didn't show a pained expression at the slightest and replied with a bright smile.

His expression immediately turned serious. A firm fighting spirit could be sensed from it.

「.....Got it. Beat up that fiend to your heart's content. I'm leaving it to you, my knight.」

「Yes, as you will.」

After Lux responded with a gentle tone, Lisha seemed to reach the limit of her exhaustion. Her eyes closed quietly and she fainted.

Lux turned his face toward Yoruka who was carrying her in the arms of Yato no Kami.

「Yoruka. Can I ask you to protect everyone in the cathedral while I'm fighting?」

「That's an easy request, Aruji-sama.」

Yoruka nodded while a delighted emotion vaguely showed through from her. She then headed toward the cathedral.

A lot of Chaff Slime was clinging throughout Yato no Kami, but if it was with her ability, she would surely be able to hold out to some extent.

「Also—thank you. For saving everyone of the theocracy and Lisha-sama.」

「.....」

Yoruka was always wearing a smile, but her eyes unusually turned round hearing Lux's words.

But, she immediately wore her usual smile and quietly casted down her gaze.

「I feel ashamed. Originally this is not something for Aruji-sama to be bothered with, I would have deal with that bandit too while I'm at it. That was my essential duty. But—」

She opened that asymmetrical pair of eyes once more and murmured with a feverish smile.

「I'm feeling content right now just from directly receiving your words of praise. —Take care, Aruji-sama.」

Lux nodded at Yoruka's words and turned his gaze toward Drakkhen.

In respond, Drakkhen used the tone of horn flute to order the Chaff Slime inserted into Asp's armor, removing them from the Drag-Ride's frame.

「Are you intending to carry some kind of plan again?」

「No-pe, this is the opposite. I'm throing away the plan.」

Drakkhen smiled and shook her head toward Lux's question.

「The amount of Chaff Slime is already insufficient to cover the whole armor of your Bahamut. Then, it's not a good plan to keep weighing down my own Drag-Ride. After all it seems your Bahamut has quite the firepower.」

In other words, it was a plan to concentrate only to her battle against Lux.

At the same time, it also meant that until now Drakkhen devoted herself wholly to move soldiers and Abyss while she hadn't shown her individual combat strength.

「Fifty Abysses and sixty Drag-Knights that I was leading are now out of combat huh. For me to be cornered until this far in a battle under this condition—the bunches from new kingdom also ain't half bad.」

Drakkhen muttered fearlessly wearing her Asp. She lifted the sharp claws on her armored arms.

Even now when she judged that her force was completely annihilated, her

expression was composed.

「You dragged in a lot of unrelated people, you tricked Mel who didn't know anything, are you calling that a respectable battle?」

「Don't spout out idealistic things here mister hero. What is called war is always like that, even if it looks like there is no blood flowing in your view, there will be someone somewhere who is hurt and lose something. Just like how us in the past were also forced to fight with absurd reason and condition by incompetent noble big shots.」

「—Understood. If that is your style, then I will just capture you, with my position and method as Seven Dragon Paladins.」

Lux brandished his great sword and stared straight toward Drakkhen.

In response, the female mercenary grinned fearlessly and readied the hard claws growing from both the armored arms.

「Let's start this anytime now, Black Hero. Dragon Marauder's Human Dragon division commander, Drakkhen Megistry, and Divine Drag-Ride Asp—will take you on-!」

At the same time with that announcement, Asp's four legs moved and rushed forward with a leap.

The armored arm with sharp claws growing was held aloft, and an attack from overhead was unleashed.

—

Part 19

North east of the holy capital—old sanctuary site.

The attacking Abysses were already dead. In the sky above the snow field and abandoned building, two Drag-Knights were battling.



「You finally get serious. My suffering won't settle down with just venting my anger!」

Mel who switched Ddraig Gwiber into Wyvern Mode sharply skated in the sky and charged.

She lightly wielded the Halberd that was a heavy weapon and struck. That aggression was like a storm.

But, Krulcifer wasn't perturbed. She saw through it and dodged with the smallest movements.

She wasn't just simply fast, because the senses of the Drag-Ride were connected with her reflexes nerves, her reaction speed was superhuman.

Thanks to being linked to her Drag-Ride using Full Connect, she was able to move with far more precision compared to before.

With her evasion that came from the mobility that was the trait possessed by Fafnir, she glidingly dodged the attack of Mel who came striking with her Halberd coming from all directions. She didn't miss the instant of opening and took it.

「—Freezing Cannon.」

The flash that was fired from the rifle-shaped special armament hit, freezing the armor of Ddraig Gwiber. —But, even though Mel was hit from the back, that ice instantly melted.

「The ice melt even when it's frozen from the back—as I thought that ability isn't a type of special armament isn't it?」

The true nature of Mel Gizalut, the strongest and youngest Drag-Knight in Ymir Theocracy.

It was doubtlessly her prodigious sense that was able to freely control the Divine Drag-Ride that she possessed, Ddraig Gwiber which had land battle form and flying form.

She was able to freely control the special mechanism of Divine Drag-Ride that was already difficult to handle even at the best of time, and she created tactics to put it to practical use using her flexible imagination.

Then, it didn't matter that the function of her Drag-Ride was drastically increased on the whole, it was still inadequate to defeat Mel.

The mystery of Ddraig Gwiber's Divine Raiment.

She would be defeated if she didn't expose the secret.

「You've become a bit better. But speed of that level won't catch up with my strength!」

Mel bared a wicked smile and her Ddraig Gwiber skated in the sky once more.

However, at the present where the Fafnir's mobility was superior, she should still be able to evade somehow—but,

「-.....!?」

- GOU-!* Intense squall pushed Mel's back and she approached with a speed that surpassed Krulcifer's prediction.

Fafnir's Auto Shield quickly activated and narrowly blocked Mel's Halberd attack, but Mel instantly let go of the Halberd and punched with both of her armored arms.

「—!?」

Although she was taken by surprise, this time her barrier blocked the blow of the armored arms.

Seeing that right now was a good chance with the opponent's attack staved off, Krulcifer quickly readied her Freezing Cannon. In that moment, Mel's flesh and blood arms let go from the armored arms and gripped her Sword Device.

「—!」

「You should have used Future Sight beforehand. —It's impossible though.」

By causing the Auto Shield to be spread in front of Krulcifer's eyes, it also stole her field of vision in reverse.

Mel released a blow using her armored arms in a flash, then she slashed using Sword Device through the gap.

The tip of the Sword Device pierced the barrier and cut Krulcifer's upper arm.

「Kuuh.....!」

She grimaced from the pain, and the strength of the hand that was holding the rifle dropped.

Mel grinned fearlessly and she swooped down to pick up the Halberd she let go.

「Even though you are a machine human, but your blood is red isn't it?」

Mel flew within inches from the snow field before she swooped up and attacked once more.

「—Ojou-sama-!」

Alterize yelled with two swords in hand but—.

「Don't interfere, this child's opponent is me. —You protect Tou-sanfather and others for me.」

「You are still planning to put on air like human family?」

Mel ascended once more and attacked with Halberd in hand.

Krulcifer reflexively fired her Freezing Cannon, but this time it passed through Mel's afterimage and didn't hit.

Furthermore heavy fog that was rising up before she realized was covering the field of vision in the area.

「This is the end Krulcifer. Orphel's revenge—!」

The Auto Shield activated and blocked the Halberd's attack—but, for some reason the seven shields that moved automatically were repelled and without stopping the attack hit.

「Ku, u.....!?!」

The barrier was scraped off and the impact pierced through the armor and ran through the body. Perhaps because of the Full Connect, she could feel the damage to the armor more strongly.

But, thanks to the armor and her body being assimilated, she noticed the existence of high temperature on her whole body.

「—I understand now Mel. The true identity of your Ddraig Gwiber's, Divine Raiment.....!」

Right after she barely muttered that, Krulcifer was thrown to the ground, breaking through the ceiling of old sanctuary site that was still remaining.

—

Part 20

The mercenary who was called as The Battlefield's Instrumentalist, Drakkhen.

Lux personally experienced, why how she reached the point of being called as legendary after wandering from battlefield to battlefield.

Her ability as capable commander, her stratagem in intelligence and bargaining.

And then, the existence of Divine Drag-Ride Asp.

But, just by facing her, it was conveyed that her battle wasn't that generous that she could survive with just those.

「I'm fired up.....! It has been a long time you know, since there was a guy who reached until where I am after all my plans were used up!」

She lifted up the steel claws that stretched out sharply and unleashed a consecutive attack with intense speed.

Horizontal slash, upper thrust, downswing, slashing lines from every direction were running in the air, dazzling Lux's eyes.

(Fast—. No, it's getting faster!)

It wasn't anything like an elegant sword technique following standard form. But, that irregular movement that wasn't trapped within form became the one thing that exactly robbed Lux from an option instead.

The operation of Quick Shot, the special move that was making use of Bahamut's Divine Raiment, Reload on Fire.

After completely predicting the opponent's preliminary motion, the time was compressed and a strengthened consecutive slash was unleashed. The move contained strength that could instantly make the opponent unable to fight, but—.

(This attack pattern, it's also doubling as buying for time?)

The preliminary motion of the disordered claw attack would be hard to read through in a short time.

Was she deciding to first seal Lux's Quick Shot seeing that it would be disadvantageous for him the more time passed because he was already bleeding a lot?

(Then—)

Lux quickly put his breathing in order, pulled Bahamut's great sword and took a stance.

But, Drakkhen who saw that shortened the tips of Asp's claws a bit while at the same time fire burst out from the back of the four legs. She drew near with explosive momentum.

「—!」

Even while feeling surprised at the unexpected action, Lux unleashed a hidden technique of Drag-Ride control.

Quick Draw—by doing body control operation and mind control operation in harmony, it would unleash just a single attack in godspeed.

—But, when it was unleashed, the distance with Asp was too close and the sword couldn't finish swinging to the end.

The moment it was blocked, the Drakkhen lunged with her sharp claws and pierced Bahamut's barrier, stabbing shallowly on Lux's shoulder.

Fresh blood spurted out and Lux's face grimaced slightly.

「Ku.....!」

The super high speed slash Quick Draw couldn't be avoided if the target only started dodging after seeing it.

Thus, Lux got a hunch seeing Drakkhen's reaction that saw through the sign that he would use his hidden technique.

That even though this should be their first time crossing swords, but this female mercenary had come here with countermeasure against Lux that was

based on enormous preliminary investigation.

「Howling Howl!」

Lux unleashed Howling Howl and pushed Asp back from their close distance against each other.

And then he changed his hold of the great sword into a backhand grip, and took a stance of drawing it far behind.

The jet black armor started creaking and shaking.

It was the stance to unleash a super powerful attack that put Drag-Ride's rampage to practical use—Recoil Burst.

「They guy called Black Hero is really scary eh. If you put too much burden to that body, it won't end up prettily for you right?」

Drakkhen grinned smugly and the four legs of Asp moved.

She leaped far backward and took distance. Furthermore she took a stance of thrusting out the sharp claws on both her hands, and from there small Daggers were fired consecutively.

It wasn't an attack that was concentrated to one spot, but a buckshot of scattered blades.

It was a countermeasure against Recoil Burst in order to prevent Lux's approach.

But, against Drakkhen's countermeasure that even looked like she was reflexively taking the optimum action, Lux too also reflexively carried out an action.

「—Recoil Burst.」

The accumulated super attack was unleashed in a downswing along with that short murmur.

The great sword that was swung from outside the range cut apart the snowfield right under without pause.

「.....-!?」

The ground surface was blown up by the impact as though it was exploded,

driving away the rain of blades.

At the same time at that moment when the field of vision was blocked the bursting up snow and soil, Lux twisted his body and flew.

The Recoil Burst became protection against the buckshot as well as smoke screen at the same time.

Drakkhen who was taken by surprise gazed at wonderment. Right after that Bahamut's slash was unleashed from the blind spot.

But, Drakkhen leaped at the last moment and evaded it.

Because it was a Divine Drag-Ride of special equipment type, she could detect the movement of Drag-Ride using Radar.

If she didn't have that, the attack just now would decide it.

But, Lux too also wasn't finished just with his move getting defended against.

He stepped into the range of the opponent who was unbalanced and attempted to connect to the next slash, but at that instant this time Drakkhen's Asp released Howling Howl from its head part.

「—I won't let you.」

The air whirled and Lux was blown away by the howl. The battle situation was back to square one once again.

Drakkhen had predicted that if she blocked against the slash normally, Lux would be able to connect it into the third hidden technique, End Action.

- Huff huff*, Lux who was unleashing his full strength despite his wound was breathing hard.

Drakkhen who saw that also took a slight breather.

Drakkhen had anticipated Bahamut that Lux possessed, and the technique Quick Shot from the Divine Raiment Reload on Fire.

Furthermore she also executed countermeasure against the three hidden techniques of Drag-Ride control. But Lux counterattacked after seeing through that.

Several tactics had crossed in the span of few moments, the surrounding atmosphere was tinged with heat.

「The countermeasures that I piled up in preparation against you didn't end up useless in the end—yet, even then they are still slightly insufficient I guess. Looks like it's not an exaggeration that you destroyed 1200 Drag-Knights of the old empire.」

Lux didn't respond to Drakkhen's talkativeness.

He merely took a stance with his great sword quietly and adjusted his breathing by exhaling out white breath.

「However the more I fight you the more I don't get it. Why are you working under a country until that far?」

「What does that mean?」

「Simple. If you have that much skill and strength, you can get better position. If you desire it, then you will be promised with wealth and authority as much as you want. And yet why—, are you swearing loyalty to such country?」

The collar of criminal that was fixed on Lux's neck.

Lux lightly touched that object that was carved with the crest of new kingdom.

「This is—the proof of admonition that I wish myself. I failed to change the old empire, this is my responsibility as an imperial family.」

「Haha! That's a gullible mind you've got there. To intend to fight for someone else's sake when you understand that you're disposable—then!」

Drakkhen pulled back the armored arm with sharp claw growing from it, and took stance.

And then, she sharpened her killing intent to the utmost limit and faced Lux in front of her.

「I'll stop from inviting you to be my subordinate. Stay as a foolish child, clinging on sweet dream....., I'll end your fight right now, right here!」

But at the same time, Lux too also wasn't stirred at the slightest. He directed

a cold gaze toward Drakkhen.

「—Tuning, on.」

The moment he muttered that, countless images of light that displayed Drag-Ride's information emerged around Bahamut.

Drakkhen who saw that kicked on the ground, and leaped.

「It doesn't matter even if it's a reckless ideal. For the sake of my and those girls' wish, I'm—going to win!」

—

Part 21

After going through the ceiling of the old sanctuary site, at the very least Krulcifer should be somewhat seriously damaged.

But, what appeared from inside the dust smoke was an unharmed Krulcifer.

Mel definitely felt response when her attack hit.

The wall off automatic defense, the Auto Shield should have been broken through too but—.

「I finally understand. The true shape of your Divine Raiment—, it's temperature isn't it?」

「.....」

Mel frowned hearing the answer that Krulcifer said indifferently.

Alterize protected the father Stiyl and the eldest son Zain while she held her breath in sudden realization.

「Temperature.....? That ability capable of ever-changing appearance, came from only one thing?」

「Yes, that's right.」

Krulcifer accepted it and continued calmly.

「The freezing bullet of my Freezing Cannon was melted, and the ability to freeze the opponent. Creating fog by melting the snow. Causing squall using temperature difference, showing illusion of light using thermal expansion of atmosphere. And then—granting high heat to other Drag-Ride, downing the control function.」

Ddraig Gwiber's temperature control Divine Raiment.

Mel applied only that one Divine Raiment to produce countless tactics.

Added with her style that was leveraging the Divine Drag-Ride's trait to freely switch between land battle mode and flying mode, she was really worthy for the name of genius Drag-Knight.

Most likely, even Krulcifer wasn't a match against her in the sense as pure Drag-Knight.

If there were a few more years, the girl might surpass her.

But—,

「I'm sorry, Mel. Because of a different reason from two years ago—I cannot lose against you.」

Her own weakness that gave up meeting her family halfway because she was under the impression that she was rejected.

She was suffering from loneliness as the result of chasing only after her past in the Ruin while hiding her true wish.

However, Lux and everyone else of the new kingdom were fighting while risking their life for the sake of someone like her.

No—her father Stiyl was also fighting for her sake from several years ago.

In that case, she couldn't falsify her own feeling.

She couldn't be scared anymore of using this special power as an XferKey's Supervisor.

「Let's settle this Mel. There is something that I have to convey to you no matter what.」

「—Hah」

What confronted her was a violent smile that was like a devil.

But, Krulcifer knew that behind that face that was painted over with hatred, it was hiding sadness that could break the girl down anytime.

The despair from losing all her family since her childhood.

Even though she had obtained the strength as first class Drag-Knight, she let even Orphel who was like a parent to her to die.

She used Elixir to escape from the pain. Mel's heart was falling into darkness.

But—,

「You actually know aren't you, Mel? That before her death, Bishop Orphel..... didn't say anything like telling you to kill me who appear to be the cause of the rampage.」

「-.....!？」

The expression of Mel who heard that distorted slightly, a crack entered her devil mask.

「She was already unable to speak. Drakkhen of Dragon Marauder used that, she talked to you using Orphel's voice. You were only being led astray by that.

「—Wrong. There is no way that's true! That time, Orphel definitely-.....!」

Mel groaned while pressing on her forehead with her flesh and blood hand.

The face of Orphel lying down with pained expression and soaked with blood flashed in the back of her mind.

She became desperate and spoke her last words to Mel.

『Kill Krulcifer. The demon who was the cause that stole everything, your family and the country's peace.....take revenge even if it cost you your life—』

That was why, Mel was,

「.....UAAaaAaH!？」

Intense headache and dizziness.

At that time, Orphel's voice told her that.

She certainly heard that, but.

「The person called Orphel inside you, is she a woman who would say such thing toward you? She would tell you to kill your enemy even if you have to pay with your life? Is she someone who can mercilessly say that to you, while you were already gasping for breath from the burden of Drag-Ride at that time.....」

「Ku, AAaAH!」

Mel shrieked in respond to Krulcifer's question.

It felt like fire hook was ransacking inside her head, everything became mixed up messily inside.

—Wrong, wrong wrong wrong!

I have to kill Krulcifer no matter what.

I have to take revenge!

Orphel, she, said that to me, with her cooling hand in my grasp—.

「Don't speak! You who aren't even a human of this world! Don't speak of ORPHEEeeeLL!」

Mel drove Ddraig Gwiber forward while screaming.

It skated in land battle form before transforming in high speed into flying form.

From below to above, she unleashed an attack using halberd with a momentum that was like volcano eruption.

「—Full Connect – On」

In response, the moment Krulcifer muttered, the seven shields of Auto Shield detached from Fafnir and took position around Mel.

At the same time their surface formed force field of blue light.

「—!?」

Krulcifer intervened at the Drag-Ride's command order for the special armament that originally would move automatically, and altered their operation.

Right after that, Krulcifer pulled the trigger of Freezing Cannon toward the deployed shields.

The beam of normal bullet that was fired impacted one of the shields floating around Mel. Immediately after that—for some reason an impact ran through the left arm of Ddraig Gwiber from behind.

「Ricochet bullet.....!? Using the shield in that way—!」

Mel was surprised seeing the new tactic, even so she began her attack.

Krulcifer completely grasped her movement.

Using the senses and super reaction speed she obtained from Full Connect, she sniped Mel who was charging forward in super accelerated speed.

Blue flash. First it was freezing bullet to stop her momentum and offensive.

Weaving through the instantaneous gap while Ddraig Gwiber's Divine Raiment was thawing the frozen part, Krulcifer aimed to bring Mel down using ricochet shooting from seven directions.

—But, even now when her weapon was instantly frozen, Mel's momentum didn't stop.

「DON'T UNDERESTIMATE MEE!」

She used her left armored arm that almost broke as shield to cover the Halberd that her right hand was holding.

She removed the arm's armor the moment it froze and without pause she forcefully let out an attack.

「Wha-.....!？」

The attack that was released at the risk of Mel's life took Krulcifer by surprise. But, even then Fafnir's mobility was slightly superior.

After Krulcifer barely dodged the sure kill attack, squall struck from above to knock her down.

Her path of escape—was predicted.

The mist enshrouding the area was groundwork to shut down the Divine Raiment of future foresight, Wise Blood beforehand.

Thus, this result was inevitable inside Mel's heart.

As long as Krulcifer's future foresight was sealed because she was unable to see due to the mist covering the field of vision, she wouldn't be unable to surpass Mel and Ddraig Gwiber.

Fafnir's barrier was pierced through and she aimed at the shoulder—toward the Force Core.

It was an unavoidable perfect timing. With this, Mel's victory should be set in

stone, but, 「What—!?!」

Fafnir's left armored arm that wasn't holding the Rifle barely blocked that Halberd.

The deadly attack was averted even at the cost of broken one arm.

「How!?! Because of the mist, your future foresight shouldn't—!」

「This is from my own prediction. I thought that if it's you, you will do at least this much. And then—」

Because of the squall that Mel caused, the surrounding mist cleared up.

「Wise Blood – AccelWisdom of Fortune and Calamity – Insightful Gaze」

The future foresight of the Divine Raiment was assembled at the same time with her mutter, and then it was sent into Krulcifer's head.

Several hundred prediction calculation was carried out, producing the formula to reach victory.

Right after that, dozens of reflective shots that were fired following that formula attacked Mel like a storm.

「——」

The back wings, every kind of join parts, and at the end, concentrated shooting in one spot that pierced the barrier.

All of Mel's option in escape and dodging were predicted, and the vital spots on her whole body were sniped.

And then the finishing blow finally pierced the Force Core on her shoulder without even an inch of deviation.

「.....Wh, y. I can't win.....」

The Force Core that was the core of Drag-Ride was smashed by the light bullet, and the function of Ddraig Gwiber halted.

The armor that lost the lifting power from its propulsion device lost strength and fell toward the ground head first.

The moment Mel's heart yielded, the body reinforcement that was brought

about by Elixir—the black geometrical pattern emerging on her shoulder until her left chest was vanishing.

The expression of Mel who recovered human reasoning was already returning into the face of a normal girl.

In the span of few seconds during her fall from the sky, Mel discerned what the truth was.

(I'm sorry, Orphel.....)

With sad and hollow expression, her thought was running toward the bishop who was her guardian who had just died.

At that time, when Orphel ordered her to kill Krulcifer even if it would cost her life, the lips of the woman whose throat was crushed were showing different words.

『I'm sorry, Mel.』

Those were all, she was speaking only those words with her whole feeling.

But, the sound of voice that entered her ear was different.

Amidst the chaos and despair, she hesitated between the words that Orphel's lips displayed to her, or the voice that her ears heard.

When it was time she had to decide which words to believe, the negative emotion inside Mel chose to fight against enemy.

However—.

However, if it was the real Orphel.

She was a woman who tried to make use of her by encouraging her path as Drag-Knight, but she was concerned about Mel's well being more than anyone. If it was her, what would she say to her at that time?

「Watch out-!」

Alterize who was wearing EX Wyvern yelled and rushed toward the falling spot Mel was heading.

But, faster than her, Krulcifer who was chasing after Mel using Fafnir caught Mel whose armor was dispelled inside her arms.

「Or, phel.....」

The girl's hand moved powerlessly, stretching toward the corpse of that woman.

In front of that body that was half-hidden behind rubbles, a bloody sentence written by the woman's own fingers was left behind on the stone paving.

『Save Mel』

The choppy letters consisted of only those words.

She was worrying for Mel's safety until the very last moment she stopped breathing.

That was, the truth of that time.

「.....I'm sorry.」

Mel apologized to that woman with a haggard expression that could break into tears anytime.

「I.....couldn't understand at all, about Orphel's feeling.....」

Even though she wanted to tell her all this time that she actually liked her, even though she was imagining what if they became family.

She kept her at distance because of her stubbornness and pride, and she was unable to pay her back with even a single thing.

「I'm sorry, Orphel..... Okaa, sanMo, ther.....」

After whispering only that, Mel ran out of strength and closed her eyes.

A trickle of tears flowed along her cheek and the girl lost consciousness.

Part 22

North of the holy capital.

In front of the collapsed cathedral, Drakkhen leaped toward Lux.

Lux's limit from his exhaustion of stamina and his bleeding was already noticeable.

But, Drakkhen didn't let her guard down until the very end.

She had mustered her ingenuity, applied the combat force she had trained and scraped up together, made use of the terrain advantage, and cornered her enemy.

But the powerful enemy before her couldn't be defeated even after all those. Now she would ruin and plunder from him with her own strength.

For Drakkhen who was used as disposable female mercenary and shunned as someone of low birth, this fight was something that she was able to accept from the bottom of her heart for the first time.

But, she still wasn't satisfied.

She knew that if a mercenary was defeated in a battlefield, there would be no next time. Thus,

(—As expected, at the end I gotta win.)

For someone who was living in battle, a battle would have value when even victory was included in it.

While she was giving more than a passing thought to that, she saw the opponent before her gripping Bahamut's Sword Device.

「Tuning, on—」

Right after Lux shortly muttered, images of light emerged around his Drag-Ride.

It was the tuning form that showed various things like numeric and graphics in ancient letters.

Originally it was a function was for the sake of tuning Drag-Ride's output, configuration, armaments, and so on, but there was a Drag-Knight who made use of it as combat skill.

「.....Relying on other person's technique like that, you've run out of plan huh, hero!」

What Lux was going to use was the battle array of Seven Dragon Paladins' vice captain, Singlen.

If Lux used that technique, then he was bound to use the two techniques that were shown to him at the Class Promotion Exam that was held in Wanheim Principality, the evasion technique—Battle Array – Vicissitudes, and the technique to focus energy into one point, Battle Array – Aeon Fire.

In that case, she could think of countermeasure.

Currently Lux was unable to see through Drakkhen's preliminary motion when she was attacking. In such condition he should be still unable to use the Quick Shot, the consecutive slash that was launched by accelerating time using Reload on Fire.

The moment she would lunge with random slashes using her sharp claws with the readiness to bring certain death—, Lux's body suddenly swayed.

「—Reload on Fire.」

Right after that mutter, red flash surged from Bahamut's frame, and a shudder ran through Drakkhen's body.

She should have act in the way so her attack couldn't be seen through but—was she read through already!?

Inside her heart she was sweating coldly like that, but the speed of Lux's sword was the same like usual.

It was a sharp slash with minimum movement going through the shortest route, but it wouldn't be able to break through Asp's defense with just that.

Left arm, right leg, and then wrist, her armor received shallow attacks on

three spots, but all of them were all right.

Just in case she leaped backward for the moment and took distance, but as expected she didn't receive any damage.

Rather than relieve it felt more like anticlimax, after that anger welled up inside.

「—Just when I thought you are going to do something at the end, it's just a stupid bluff!」

When Drakkhen was going to move into offense, Lux leaped toward her.

「How obstinate, I have prepared countermeasure for all of your attack——.....-!?!」

When she was going to intercept Lux's charge, something strange occurred in her Asp.



The three spots that were cut just now flickered with red light, each of them was moving with unexpected ultra high speed.

「U, gu, AaAaaaAAAAAH.....!？」

- MEGIMEGIMEGII!* The sound of metal armor getting squashed struck Drakkhen's remaining eardrum.

Every moving part of Asp's armor couldn't catch up with the speed of the three spots that was too fast and self-destructed.

At the same time, Drakkhen's body was pulled by the movement of the armor she was wearing. Some part of her bones broke and her muscles were torn.

「Wha, what.....! This is!? What is hapening—!?」

Drakkhen shrieked along with blood splash from her body. She leaped backward to escape, but at that moment, a voice came from above her.

「—Violent Strike. The Divine Raiment of compression strengthening is applied to only a part of the enemy's armor. It forcefully accelerate the Drag-Ride's part and destroy it, a technique of tuning.」

「Don't tell me, you—!?」

The secret technique of tuning that he learned from the battle against Singlen, Battle Array.

Lux combined it with Bahamut's Divine Raiment, and created a new combat skill.

In a flash, Lux pursued the withdrawing Drakkhen.

And then, he unleashed it toward Asp that was still unable to move because of the damage.

「Reload on Fire.」

「—!?」

Right after Bahamut's armor shined crimson, the armor of Asp that Drakkhen was clad with instantly burst apart into pieces.

The seven high speed consecutive slashes that came from the compression

strengthening of time instantly destroyed the remaining armored arm, the joints of the four legs, Force Core, and the Sword Device, cornering the opponent into a powerless state in no time at all.

It started with taking initiative using Violent Strike to accelerate the enemy's Drag-Ride, destroying it, and then connecting the move to accelerating oneself and launched Quick Shot.

The acceleration of oneself using Bahamut's Divine Raiment would cause the slowing of the user's own time at the beginning, because of that the user had to completely predict ahead the opponent's movement when using it.

Thus, the combat skill this time transcended the weak point of being unable to execute 『sure kill attack』 at the first move.

It was a technique that was newly created, that even Drakkhen who had obtained detailed information about Lux didn't know about it until just now—.

「Haha....., what a man. No matter how many countermeasures I stacked up, it's still insufficient.....no, that's not it. So I finally meet a man that is impossible to be prepared against huh.」

Even more than his skill, what was truly terrifying from him was the speed of his growth, Drakkhen realized.

—'But, the battle is still not over yet.'

Lux wouldn't kill her in order to capture and obtain information from her.

She herself was already worn out too, but she wouldn't give up the match until the very end.

Lux also reached his limit, and Bahamut's armor was finally dispelled too.

The moment he adjusted his breathing with a large exhale 'fuu', Drakkhen's body that was lying down on the ground sprang up.

She used one leg to kicked on the ground toward the opponent that was ten ml away.

Originally her Drag-Ride couldn't move properly because of the impact from the armor getting smashed, but if it was she herself, she could still move.

「Lux!? Watch out—!?!」

When Drakkhen was going to stab a blade into Lux's chest with broken right arm—,

「That's, not permitted.」

A dignified voice resounded from somewhere, and the knife attack was blocked by Celis's rapier.

At the same time, Philuffy who appeared from behind a building twisted Drakkhen's arm from behind and sealed her movement.

When her joint was dislocated *gokiri* after that without pause, Lux became a bit flustered.

「Celis-senpai! Also Phi-chan too!」

「I'm sorry for being unable to help in the battle Lux. But, we were also pursued, so it couldn't be helped.」

「Just now, all the people walking around, were finally taken care of.」

It seemed after the two broke through the encirclement and lured away some enemy, they became unable to use their Drag-Ride. After that it seemed they then faced the Dragon Marauder members who were concealing themselves in the flesh.

However, for them to be able to overwhelm even infantry in a battle without wearing Drag-Ride, as expected from these two.

After taking care of the infantries Dragon Marauder, it seemed the two were observing the situation, wondering whether they could somehow support Lux even without Drag-Ride.

「Chih, this is also unexpected for me. For my subordinates to lose against noble young ladies in hand-to-hand.」

Drakkhen was rolled over by Philuffy and she smiled in self-depreciation. Celis silently turned her face toward her.

「Before this you said to us, that we are overestimating our own strength and looking down on the enemy. Certainly it might be just as you said. But—」

「I see. So I was also similarly underestimating my enemy huh. The aristocrat daughter Drag-Knight users, and the ruined prince protecting them. So, you all aren't just bunches of girls resting on your laurels getting drunk with your position and armed might..... Even though you girls are noble, until now I've never met that kind of noble even once.」

「I sympathize with your environment but, your sin won't be redeemed with that. We will take you back to the new kingdom and interrogate you there.」

「.....So far as a defeat goes, being able to survive even as prisoner is still one of the better way it can go. I hate torture though.」

The lamenting Drakkhen was tied with rope and she was delivered to the guards.

When the relief for the people in the cathedral began, Yoruka showed up while carrying the fainted Lisha.

「More importantly, is Krulcifer all right? I heard that she was in the middle of battle against Ymir's Seven Dragon Paladins, Mel Gizalut.....」

「Before my Drag-Ride dispelled, I received Dragon Voice from her. It looks like there is no more need for worry.」

Lux showed a smile at Celis's words and he answered her.

「—In that case, there is also no need to force ourselves to go there to join up with her then.」

In respond to Yoruka's refreshing mutter, Philuffy slightly turned her serious face.

「That's not it, we are being tactful, right?」

‘As always, even though she is looking really absentminded like that, Philuffy is sharp huh’, Lux thought with a wry smile.

Lux slowly turned his face and spoke as though telling Krulcifer who was right now at another place.

「Right. I want to let Krulcifer-san, to be with her family without any outsider intruding for a while, so—」

He prayed that Krulcifer would have a happy time.

No matter what Krulcifer actually was, Lux was convinced that he would be able to wish her to be happy.

He wanted that if possible, the number of people who could think like that would also increase inside her family.

With that wish in mind, he looked up the sky where snow was starting to fall.

Epilogue – Divine Princess Descend

Part 1

The kidnapping plan of Dragon Marauder was prevented, and the Pilgrimage Festival also ended safely. Two days already passed since then.

The repair of the destroyed cathedral, the treatment of the injured, the reorganization of Sanctuary Knight Order, and so on. There were still a mountain of problems, but the theocracy's main force survived, so dealing with aftermath could be left to them.

A part of Dragon Marauder that still had some life in them retreated, the rest was captured and became prisoner.

For the time being the division commander Drakkhen seemed to be planned to be questioned by new kingdom later.

Because Lux and others were also very exhausted from the battle this time, he had inn prepared by Einfolk house for him along with Lisha and others.

Even so Celis acted with fake stoicism, she behaved firmly even while resting, Yoruka didn't look like she was tired at all, Philuffy was sleeping by leaning on Lux, Lisha who saw that became red faced and jealous, those two days were really lively.

What was unexpected was during the rest, not just Alterize, even the family of Einfolk house sometimes came visiting.

Not to mention the father Stiyl, even the moody eldest brother Zain also came. Furthermore the two little sisters were also showing their face under the guise of nursing them.

They came bringing Ymir's rare praying tool and book, or the country's deluxe baked sweets and fruits, they opened their heart to Philuffy who loved sweets, and asked the famous Celis about her valor.

In contrast, Krulcifer came to look at their condition in the beginning, but after that she didn't really show her face. When Lux asked, it seemed she was going to visit Mel.

Mel's life also wasn't in danger, but she was weakened due to the side effect of the secret medicine called Elixir, she wouldn't be able to use Drag-Ride for a while.

According to the record left behind at the desk of the dead Bishop Orphel and Drakkhen's testimony, it came to light that Orphel was pretending to collude with Drakkhen while forming a plan in order to capture her instead.

After that Ney Louches returned to the surface. Krulcifer ordered her to remain as a believer of the theocracy.

They already received information regarding Ruin from the archive. Krulcifer judged that it would be better for the Automata to not be imprudently stimulated until they understood various things.

And then, in a sunny morning without snow falling.

—Finally the time to return home arrived.

—

「It was a short time, but I've been really indebted to you.」

The morning of the day of departure.

In the living room of the mansion, Lux along with Krulcifer was in front of the head of Einfeld house, Stiyl.

Lisha and others had departed first using horse carriage, so they weren't here.

Lux and Krulcifer would also follow them after saying goodbye. When they came out of the holy capital, they planned to fly using Drag-Ride toward the new kingdom.

「It's me who am much indebted to you Lux-dono. She will put you to trouble,

but please take care of my daughter.」

「Yes. Please take care of me too from here on.」

Compared to the day when they first met, today his vaguely obstinate impression had vanished.

He was a man of few words which was suitable with his quiet and strict impression, but his tone was somewhat gentle and kind.

「My? It sounds like greeting for marriage proposal isn't it.」

Krulcifer chuckled with a teasing smile. Lux became flustered with red face hearing that.

「Tha, that's not it-!? I'm just, speaking to be allowed to get along well with Krulcifer-san in the Academy—,wait, speaking of that.」

In the end, what happened with the case of misunderstanding about her betrothal with Lux?

Or rather, was it alright to speak about that right now in this place?

While Lux was troubled like that, the eldest son Zain who was nearby shook in laughter.

「Hahaha. That's an unneeded worry you know, Lux-dono. Our family has already know about the good-for-nothing plan that this foolish little sister perpetrated after all.」

「Eh—?」

When Lux was bewildered like that, the butler Alterize who was standing at the back let out a deep sigh.

「The other day, I heard it by chance when Lux-sama was talking with Ojou-sama. The truth is that Ojou-sama isn't betrothed formally with Lux-sama or anything. That it was Ojou-sama's lie—」

「My? It's upsetting to have everything become turned into my fault. It was merely you who jumped to the wrong conclusion without even giving me any time to give you the accurate detail, isn't that also the cause of the misunderstanding?」

Seeing Krulcifer smiling without the slightest hint of any guilty feeling, Alterize's face turned even more displeased.

「Someone like you is really..... Have you forgotten that last night you were also scolded by Lord Stiyl?」

「I'm reflecting of it. It seems that Onii-sama is also really joyful seeing my rare blunder anyway.」

「Fuh, don't say something that sounds bad in people's ear. It was just funny, knowing that even you have personality that will play with various little tricks for the sake of a man.」

The father Stiyl also smiled wryly while watching that conversation.

(.....I see, Krulcifer-san, she was able to talk properly with her family.) Just from seeing that trifling dialogue, even Lux could vaguely understand that Krulcifer and her family was able to understand each other a bit more than before.

He was also relieved that the case of engagement was solved, but seeing this was what made him the most happy.

「Sayonara Lux-sama. When we next meet, please also bring souvenir from the new kingdom with you by all means.」

「I wanted to talk a little bit more. Later again.....」

「I won't forget for sure. Then, good bye.」

Lux also said goodbye to the two little sisters, then he exited the gate of Einfeld house together with Krulcifer.

The sky was sunny, but there was snow remaining. The surrounding was still chilly.

Townscape of tall buildings made from stone, and solemn atmosphere flowing peacefully.

Even though he was only here for a few days, Lux felt somewhat reluctant to leave.

「Now, let's go.」

After Krulcifer told him that and started walking, footsteps suddenly came approaching from behind.

The moment Lux reacted to that and turned around,

「Yahhoo! Oniii-chaaan!」

A silhouette drew near with rapid footsteps and the small body leaped toward Lux's chest.

「Uwah!?!」

A girl that looked vaguely familiar with wool muffler around her neck brought her face near.

A girl with trait of beautiful platinum hair—one of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Mel Gizalut.

「Mel.....!? Why are you here!? Is your body alright!?!」

He heard that she was unable to even walk properly due to the side effect of Elixir, but currently Mel looked energetic.

「Thank you for worrying about me. As I thought, Onii-chan is really kind.」

Mel who showed a wide bright smile was in her usual innocent pretense mode.

「Don't make merry too much. Your body is still seriously ill you know?」

「Come to think of it I guess that's true.」

She smoothly deflected the admonition and she looked up to Lux.

「Then Onii-chan. It's fine even if you carry me in your arm if you are worried about me you know?」

「Ahaha.....」

Lux felt a bit relieved seeing Mel's innocent attitude.

Her misunderstanding toward Krulcifer should be cleared, but she had just lost Bishop Orphel who was like a parent to her.

Perhaps Mel noticed Lux's feeling, her expression abruptly changed.

「You are really a strange person. To still worry about me even after I attacked

you like that.」

「.....That was, not Mel's fault.」

「I'm relieved that you will say that, but getting indebted to other isn't something that I like. That's why—someday I will pay back this debt for sure. Perhaps I'll even pay it quickly when I go to the new kingdom in the future.」

「.....I see. Take care of me from here on, Mel.」

Lux was relieved hearing her voice.

Then Krulcifer chuckled to interrupt.

「Aren't you going to also pay back your debt to me with something I wonder?」

「I already did that right? From here on you will be able to fight for my sake after all, that's the highest honor there is.」

「.....What is this about?」

Lux was puzzled at the conversation between the two.

「I was appointed as an aide of Seven Dragon Paladins—for Mel that is.」

「EEeEEH!?!」

Krulcifer smoothly said such thing.

「Wait, is it okay!? Krulcifer-san normally would be at new kingdom, and yet—」

「That's why once a month I'll return back to Ymir, conversely Mel will also come to the new kingdom. It will be somewhat troublesome. But with this I'll also be able to participate in the duty of Seven Dragon Paladins.」

「.....」

It was a stunt that was possible because the new kingdom was allied with the theocracy, but he also wondered if this was okay for Mel.

「Let's meet again at the new kingdom. Also, as I thought, you are really a good man—」

「Ah.....」

- Chuu*, Mel lightly kissed Lux's cheek before separating from him.

「.....Thank you, Onii-chan.」

Her cheeks reddened looking somewhat shyly and she waved her hand with a bashful expression.

And then, she ran away toward the direction of Einfolk house.

When the soft sensation of luscious lips caused Lux's face to grow hot, Krulcifer was unusually looking at him with unblinking gaze.

「What are you doing getting lovestruck when the other party is a child? Or perhaps, Lux-kun's interest is for little girl I wonder?」

「Tha, that's not it!? I, I was just a bit surprised—」

Seeing Lux's panicked manner, Krulcifer went 「Hmmm?」 and smiled with a hinting expression, 「Haa..... In any case—it felt like this time nothing goes as planned. Even though I thought that we finally could enjoy a trip with just the two of us.....even the engagement matter was found out, and I was ganged up mercilessly in the family meeting.」

「A, ahaha.....」

Lux smiled wryly.



(About that, no matter how I think about it, that's completely Krulcifer-san's won fault though—) Lux smiled wryly without being able to say that.

.....But, he wondered what she was actually really planned to do.

If Einfeld house wasn't told that the engagement was a misunderstanding, the matter might really come to pass as it was, and yet—.

Was she thinking, that she would be fine with that?

When Lux was thinking about that, his chest was growing hot for a bit.

「No way, right.....」

Lux muttered that and climbed the horse carriage, then Krulcifer sat beside him and smiled coolly.

「Say, Lux-kun. I made various blunders in my return home this time—but, there is just one result that is really a good thing you know?」

「Eh.....?」

Krulcifer slowly brought her shoulder near to Lux and she put her hand on his.

The smooth sensation of her hand and the body temperature that was transmitted through the fur coat caused Lux's heart to throb hard *dokun* inside his chest.

「I was scolded because I lied about the matter of engagement, but I was praised by the whole family for choosing Lux-kun as fiancée candidate. They told me that I chose a fine man.」

「Is that so, that's great—.....wait, EEEEEH!?」

「That's why, it's clear from the matter this time, if Lux-kun will become my companion, we won't need to ask for anymore affirmation from Einfeld house you know? That's why next—it depends on only Lux-kun's feeling.」

「Wai-, wait a second!? I'm someone who still has a lot of debt burdening me, I'm a criminal of the old empire—」

「It's not like this is a talk about binding the engagement right now. But, seeing that reaction, it seems I have a chance isn't it?」

Krulcifer smiled in enjoyably and she brought her body to stick even closer to

him.

「Thank you. I love you—Lux-kun.」

The girl softly kissed the lips of the panicked Lux.

—

Part 2

「Even so I'm amazed with headmaster. To really let Lisha-sama and others go away—」

Cross Field of the new kingdom.

Airi was sitting on the sofa of the Academy's drawing room while making a reproachful gaze.

A few days after Lisha and co, four Divine Drag-Ride users departed to chase after Lux.

Airi and the Triad who were spending their time worrying endlessly ended up welcoming a certain visitor following the instruction of Relie who had departed to the royal capital for an urgent business.

「Really good grieeef. Even though I also wanted to go tease them. Well, I don't have the aptitude to be able to fly until Ymir in one day thoughhh.....」

Tillfur muttered that with pouting lips.

Then, the senior Sharis tapped on her shoulder.

「Come now, it can't be helped. They have important duty, and the princess had also strengthened our Drag-Ride for us. Obtaining the skill to be able to use this skillfully is the priority.」

「Yes. Catching up with the ability of Lux-san and others.....even if we are unable to go that far, this is for the sake of obtaining the power to be able to become their strength even if just for a little.」

After Noct concluded in the end like that, *kon kon* a knocking sound could be heard.

「Please enter」 After they spoke out, two people entered inside the drawing room.

A young man with bad expression of the eyes and a part of his blonde hair was standing on end, and a gentle looking young man with androgynous face.

The Seven Dragon Paladins of Wanheim Principality, Greifer, and his aide Coral.

As someone who was a bit acquainted with them, Relie asked them to guide and kept these two company while they were staying here.

Relie called the two to be helper in Cross Field where the combat force had thinned down.

「Good grief, you are a slave driver as usual yeah, not even giving any time to rest after the long trip.....」

「Ahaha, sorry for this. Even though it seems you all are having difficulty with various things, but you were asked to guide us in the Academy and keeping us company.」

Greifer who was grumbling peevishly and Coral who was greeting with a wry smile.

But, inside her heart Airi was relieved that they came here.

Because from what she heard from the story of her big brother Lux, these two were upright characters.

The vice captain of Seven Dragon Paladins—Singlen Shelbrit.

He was the perpetrator who pulled Lux into Seven Dragon Paladins, and gave a hint of his plan to create a world that was unified into a country ruled by Drag-Knight. He was a powerful person with terrifying thought.

If that man by chance came here, it would cause no end of nervousness for Airi.

「We are also indebted to the two of you in the principality, so please don't mind it. More importantly, can I ask you something?」

「What is it? If it's not something that touch secret matter, you can ask anything—」

Coral smiled gently. Airi asked him with a serious expression.

「Can I ask what is going to happen in the world right now? Like the reason Headmaster Relie was suddenly called to the capital in a hurry—」

Coral was taken by surprise hearing what she said. He then smiled.

「.....How sharp. We haven't heard about the detail. But, I have a hunch that soon after this, something big will happen. We are coming here also for the sake of discussing that I believe.」

「What does that mean?」

Sharis asked with a tilted head. Coral took a deep breath and told her.

「Right now, it seems a military council is being held in the royal capital you know? Two Seven Dragon Paladins are being called to the royal capital. One is vice captain Singlen. And then, the other one is.....」

When Coral halted his words promptly, Greifer beside him continued with a mutter.

「Yeah, our captain in Seven Dragon Paladins—the representative of the alliance chose by the world.」

—

Part 3

「U, AaaA.....」

Wordless dry scream was squeezed out from the citizens of the royal capital Lordgalia.

Terror, despair. When people encountered an outrageous happening, they would lose words before screaming.

The steel giant body that pierced the sky, which had stopped moving for a long time when it tried to attack the castle before.

The fifth Ruin, Gigas was activated once more and started walking.

That terrifying weapon which attempted to destroy the royal capital, the new kingdom in the past was reactivated. The citizens were turning stiff, they were rooted in the place.

—

「—The people of the royal capital is scared. This is our turn. Oi, philistine. If it's your Leviathan, will you be able to take that on somehow?」

「If you feel like accompanying the farce, then go out there, you old hag dressing like young girl. That's some guts you've got there, giving instruction to this me when you bought your World Rank with money.」

「Hou, is that the jealousy of a man who cannot accept defeat? Since when you became that kind of unsightly man?」

In a room for guests inside the royal castle, two man and woman from among three people were talking.

One was a figure wearing blue coat sitting on a chair with loose and arrogant posture.

The vice captain of Seven Dragon Paladins, the Blue Tyrant, Singlen Shelbrit.

And then the woman arguing with him was wearing red cloak with showy ornaments. She was staring outside from the window.

She was an old friend of Relie, the head of Vanfrick Company that had the world under its thumb from behind the scene, Magialca Zen Vanfrick.

Relie who was also inside the room was called here in order to welcome the two of them.

「.....A, an urgent message-! Th, the Gigas is starting to move in the capital! The immediate formation—n, no, the dispatch of interception squad is permitted-!」

A youth who was still young, a platoon captain in the military of the next generation rushed into the room where the three were at.

But, Magialca who possessed the greatest authority among the three didn't even twitch.

「—I know by looking from the window here. Don't yell loudly, I hate noisiness.」

The girl—no, she looked young but she was a woman of blooming age, the woman was calmly staring at that sight from the townscape of the royal capital.

Regardless she didn't show even the slightest twitch. She made a wry smile that showed her pointed canine tooth.

But, perhaps the platoon captain who saw that composed act got his nerve touched. The youth pressed on.

「Thi, this isn't a trivial matter! Currently you are temporarily entrusted with the full authority of the military! If we don't deal with it quickly, it will be too—」

「Well, calm down, young man.」

「Who can be calm in this kind of time! Lowly people like a merchant who doesn't belong to any country, what do you think this danger to our new kingdom—!」

The youth forgot himself from being too angry and his hand moved to grab the woman's collar, at that moment—, the top and bottom of the man was

reversed.

「—Shut up brat.」

- DOoN!* There was the sound of a back hitting the stone paving.

Right after that the man's gaze saw the ceiling, and he noticed that he was just instantly thrown.

He saw Magialca crouched and pulled out a knife which was thrust at his neck.

「Wha, wha.....-!？」

He wondered what just happened. The woman in red cloak looked down on the youth who was knocked down into confusion and grinned fearlessly.

「Look carefully at Gigas's movement. There is no sign at all that it will attack. Their aim is the same like this knife. A self-introduction that displayed their might. You're going to get taken advantage of if you show your fear you know?」

Magialca whispered indifferently while standing up and putting away the knife.

While she was a head of a big financial conglomerate, she was also a genius well versed in martial arts.

The captain of Seven Dragon Paladins, and first rank of the World Rank.

The youth tasted a glimpse of that true strength that served as Philuffy's master when she was young.

「Whether it's war or business, they have some sort of common point. You lose if the opponent look down on you—well, it's something like that. Take lesson okay, captain-dono.」

「U, a.....」

The youth slowly stood up, but his legs were still unsteady.

But, his body was already ruled by fear.

「Aa, I don't oppose in dispatching soldier. We've got to show some labor so that the citizens won't question our performance. But don't send out too many.

And then absolutely don't start attacking from our side. If you get it then go, —your answer?」

「Ye, yes-!」

Finally the youth squeezed out his voice and left the guest room in panic.

After that, Magialca turned her gaze outside the window once more and smiled.

「Although, it won't mean anything if we too don't gather equal combat force. I'm giving out assembling call. We are going to meet their aggression with the whole combat force of world—the Seven Dragon Paladins.」

—

Gigas slowly traced back its footsteps when it was invading and retreated.

While the Wyvern force of the new kingdom's military was surrounding it from afar, a girl's voice reverberated through the whole territory of the capital.

『—This is my first appearance. My name is Listelka Rei Arshalia. The owner of this Ruin, and an imperial family member of the old era when the Ruin existed.』

The people of the capital stood still in a daze.

And then, the girl's voice was slowly formed so that even the royal castle where the queen and consuls were at could also listen.

『I have no intention to fight with everyone. I only wish to return this Gigas that became a nuisance to this city back to its original position. The process will be carried out with meticulous caution, but please be careful so that no one won't be hurt.』

The gentle and kind voice of the girl could be heard by the surrounding.

While everyone was paralyzed with surprise, the footstep of Gigas that was like earthquake resounded.

『We the clan of the LordCreator is wishing for dialogue. We wish to tell the truth about what happened in this world at the past, and ask for cooperation. In order to save this world from the approaching fate of ruin—』

The girl in a dress finished muttering that inside the control room of Gigas—.

The first princess of Holy Arcadia Empire, Listelka cut off the communication that was broadcasted to outside and let out a small sigh.

「How was it Fugil? Did I do it well?」

「It's splendid. Surely the negotiation after this will also progress well. I will accompany your highness too as guard.」

「That's good. Then let's begin Fugil—for the new peacereign of our wish.」

—

At the other side, inside the castle of royal capital.

Magialca's lips distorted into an arc while staring at the Gigas where those people were at.

「So they finally started huh. The lot who were raising havoc inside my turf.You all were acting sneakily in the shadow for a long time. —I'll crush you all, you race of fossils.」

And then, she bared open her eyes with sharp eye glint.

The campus festival that would begin in the Academy one week later.

Before that the shadow of a huge storm was approaching.

Afterword

Many thanks. This is Akatsuki Senri.

Recently I'm troubled because the flow of time is too fast.

It feels like a month is like a week. Even though I did my first autograph session at Taiwan in February of this month, it felt like it happened only two, three months ago.

However was I able to grow as much as the time that had passed?

If I'm careless it feels like just the blink of eye isn't it.

About the anime, I was called to show up just for a bit at the script meeting.

Normally I with my editor would spend most of our time face to face in my room or café, beating up each other, so talking with people from various occupations was really stimulating.

And then, I realized just how much I didn't use my throat usually.

(When I got carried away and talked a lot, my throat hurt.)

Anyway, being always really busy is the same for everyone (sweat).

Now then, the thanks this time while the broadcast period for the anime is approaching like this.

Kasuga Ayumu-sama who kindly took charge for this book's illustration.

Thank you very much for the book cover with amazing quality in this cramped angle and also the beautiful illustrations.

When I received the rough sketch for this volume's frontispiece, it was at a state without character color or hair ornaments and so on, so I checked by comparing each one's breast size!

My editor Satou-sama. Thank you very much for always checking the manuscript.

This time the first draft was late because my health got unwell, so next time I will do my be....., uuh.....my head.

Well then, please take care of me along with the anime that will begin eventually from now on too.